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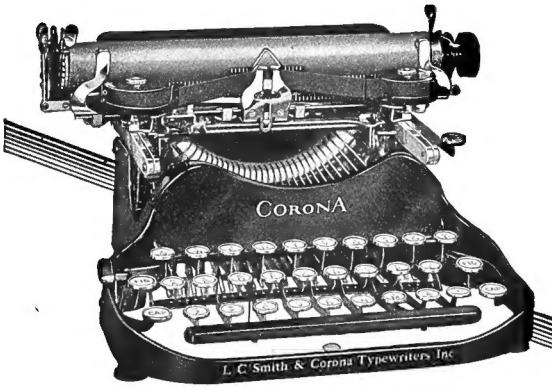

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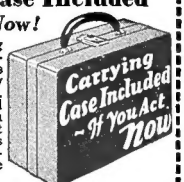

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The next issue of ALL-STORY on the stands October 1

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, 280 BROADWAY, NEW YORK,

WILLIAM T. DEWART, President C. T. DIXON, Vice-President

MESSAGERIES HACHETTE
8, La Belle Sauvage, Ludgate Hill, London, E.C.4

PARIS: HACHETTE & CIE.,
111 Rue Réaumur

Published every other Wednesday and copyright, 1930, by The Frank A. Munsey Company. Single copies, 20 cents. By the year, $4.00 in United States, its dependencies, Mexico and Cuba; $7.00 to Canada and Foreign Countries. Remittances should be made by check, express money order or postal money order. Currency should not be sent unless registered. Entered as second-class matter November 28, 1896, at the post-office at New York, under the Act of March 3, 1879. The entire contents of this magazine are protected by copyright, and must not be reprinted without the publishers' permission. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office. Copyrighted in Great Britain.

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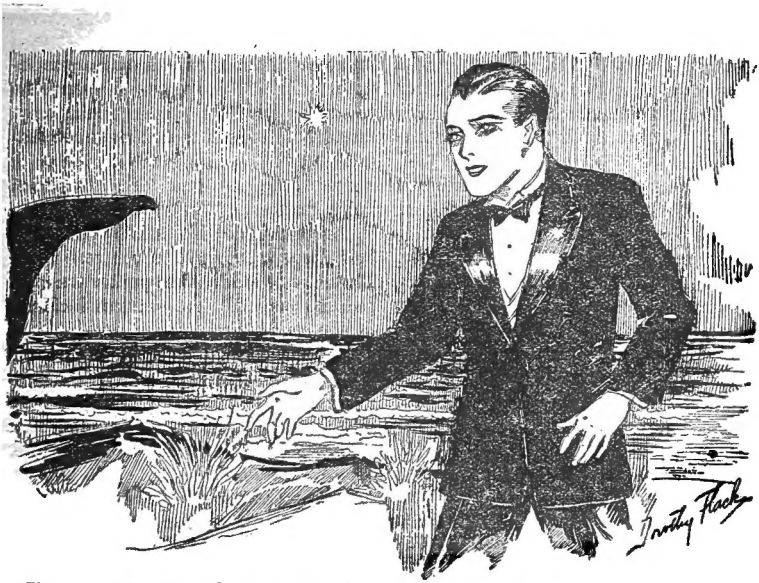
Cast Aside

Light words, lightly uttered! How could she know they would bring the deepest humiliation of womanhood—sacred love betrayed?

By Ruby M. Ayres

THE sound of his own name, spoken in a high, scornful young voice, aroused Buchanan from his doze; it penetrated his semiconsciousness vaguely, and brought him back, with relief that was almost painful, from a vivid dream of a past folly.

He had fallen asleep in a deck chair beneath the hotel windows with the warm sunshine on his face, and the soft sighing of the sea in his ears; he



He heard her sob. It was the girl he sought, out here alone at this hour of night!

opened his eyes now on chill gray twilight.

"I call him an insufferable prig! Do you know, Kathy, he's got his own valet here, and a chauffeur and two huge cars! Yesterday he changed his suit four times."

Somebody laughed amusedly for answer, and the scornful voice rattled on again disgustedly.

"As for that sister-in-law of his! Why, *any one* could look as well as she does if they wore Jenny frocks, and shoes with diamond buckles! Oh, it makes me wild to see her trail in to dinner in a different gown every night! I feel as if I could just jump up and say, 'I could look every bit as nice as *you* do, madam, if I had the chance. You'd be *quite* ordinary looking if you had to wear ready-made clothes and cheap hats.'

"She's a horrid woman—I said 'Good morning' to her this morning, and she just stared at me as if I were dirt!"

"She's not worth worrying about," said the girl who had laughed in a quiet, matter-of-fact voice. "I dare say *she's* jealous of *you* because you're so young and pretty. She's quite made up when you're close to her, you know, Cecelie, and she must be at least forty."

"I know, and she ogles Mr. Buchanan like a schoolgirl—oh, it makes me sick! I wish we hadn't come here at all—I thought at first it was going to be lovely, but we're out of it, Kathy, and that's the truth!

"Nobody wants dowdily dressed girls with only just enough money to pay their bill. It's not a bit of use coming to hotels like this without tons

of clothes and diamonds, and heaps of money to spend. Why, even the waiters know we're here by the skin of our teeth—their manner to us is quite different to what it is to the Buchanans—"

"Nonsense!" The other girl laughed again. "That's just your imagination. You're down on your luck this evening, and everything seems wrong. What's upset you?"

There was a silence. Buchanan sat up as quietly as he could for fear the wicker chair in which he was sitting should creak; he half turned his head and tried to look up at the window above him from which he knew the two voices came, but there was a wide projecting stone sill which obscured his view.

He was interested in spite of himself, and wondered who the speaker could be whose ire he had roused.

Buchanan had not been particularly interested in his fellow guests; he had come to Newquay against his will by doctor's orders.

He did not play golf, and he had been forbidden to bathe, so he spent his time scouring the country in one or other of his cars, and wishing to goodness he were back in New York.

HE was just about to rise to his feet when the angry young voice that had first attracted his attention burst out again.

"What's upset me? Why, that Buchanan man himself! I was coming through the lounge this afternoon just behind him, and he let the swing door fall back in my face! Oh, I know what you're going to say, that he couldn't have done it purposely."

"I'm quite sure he didn't! He's a gentleman, anyway. Don't be silly, Cecelie."

"I'm not silly! And two motor cars and a valet don't make a man a gentleman. Oh, if I only had a chance to be *some one* just for a week, or a month! I knew it would make me dissatisfied to come here—I knew I should hate my own life afterward more than ever."

Buchanan held his breath; the color had deepened a little in his pale face. He knew now who the speaker was; he recalled perfectly the luckless incident of the swing door.

It had been quite unintentional on his part; and he had turned immediately to apologize; but the furious face of the girl had discouraged him, and he had fled without attempting to defend his conduct.

The unemotional voice spoke again.

"I can't understand Mr. Buchanan upsetting any one who does not know him, dear. After all, he's quite an ordinary man, except that he looks rather interestedly ill."

"*Interestingly ill!*" echoed the other indignantly. "I don't call it interesting when a man just looks worn out with dissipation. That's what's the matter with *him*—"

"Oh!" Buchanan expostulated under his breath.

There is not much dissipation in a sharp attack of pneumonia followed by a relapse and complications.

Buchanan rose softly to his feet—he moved the cane chair nearer to the wall and climbed onto it. By raising himself on tiptoe he could just see over the wide window ledge and into the room where the two girls were sitting.

It was a large, stiffly furnished room which was seldom used. The lights were on, and he could see the two girls distinctly.

One of them, a small, uninteresting looking little person, sat in an arm-

chair with an open book on her lap. She was plainly dressed in dark blue with an uninspiring hat. There was perturbation in her face as she watched her companion, who was pacing up and down the room, very much as a lion paces the few feet of his prison cage.

This was a tall girl with a defiant carriage, who wore a blue pull-on above a white pleated skirt, and a béret to match stuck carelessly on her curly brown hair.

Buchanan had seen her before and had rather admired the jaunty way in which she wore the blue béret.

He looked at her now with interest.

His first thought was that she was not in the least pretty, and his next thought was that she was something much better!

Sun and wind had tanned her face a healthy brown; dark brows just now scowled above the bluest eyes he had ever seen; her chin was small and resolute; her mouth firm—almost obstinate.

Her agitated pacing up and down brought her close to the window, and Buchanan scrambled hastily down from his chair and tiptoed away through the dusk.

"All right, my lady," he said to himself with a chuckle as he went round to the front door of the hotel and up to his own room. "Two can play at that game."

CHAPTER II

COALS OF FIRE

MORE than one pair of feminine eyes noticed at dinner that night that Roger Buchanan had changed his seat at table. Previously he had always turned his back on the other guests, and devoted himself to the beautifully dressed woman who sat beside him, and to his brother.

The Buchanans were the most interesting people in the hotel. Every one knew of their wealth, and the eligibility of Roger. He and his younger brother were as unlike as it is possible for two people to be.

Roger was tall, and just now rather delicate looking as the result of his illness; his brother Philip was short and stout, with quick, nervous gestures, very different from Roger's slow, almost lazy movements and manner of speech.

Philip's wife sat between the two men. She was a handsome, dark woman, with restless eyes and too red lips. Her gowns were magnificent, her diamonds the wonder and envy of every woman in the place.

To-night she was wearing a daring frock of cerise and pansy, cleverly blended; a flashing dragon fly of emeralds and diamonds was poised on her shoulder.

She talked a great deal, and behaved as if she knew that the eyes of the entire room were upon her.

Occasionally she posed as the fond mother toward the handsome little boy who had his meals in their suite in charge of two white-uniformed nurses; sometimes she insisted on bringing him down to dinner with her, extravagantly dressed in a velvet suit with an expensive lace collar.

People said that it was her great ambition in life to keep her husband's brother a bachelor, so that her boy might inherit his wealth.

Few of those who had made his interests their own knew that there was an excellent reason for Roger Buchanan's indifference to the fair sex. "Once bitten, twice shy," is one of the truest sayings ever invented. The youthful

folly of which Buchanan had been dreaming that evening when the sound of Cecelie's voice roused him, had so far proved a most effectual barrier between flirtation and real love.

He was perfectly aware that he was one of the most eligible bachelors in New York; perfectly aware that most of the women he knew laid snares for his feet; but he had grown used to their wiles, and by now he could carefully walk over their traps without danger.

CECELIE VANSTONE and the uninteresting-looking girl whom she had addressed as "Kathy," sat at the table nearest the Buchanans.

Cecelie sat up very straight and stiff, her eyes bent on her plate. She wore a plain black evening gown, and had no jewelry, unless one counted the small string of imitation pearls which she wore round her brown throat; but she looked somehow lovely and distinguished in spite of the cheapness of her frock; her hair was beautiful, and the angry, defiant look which still lingered in her eyes suited her.

Buchanan noticed that she sat almost without speaking, crumbling her bread with nervous fingers.

He let his soup get cold as he watched the girl's defiantly erect head. It seemed a shame, he thought. At that moment he would have liked to give her a diamond necklace and a sable coat and lace frock, and tell her she was quite welcome to either or both of his cars.

Philip's wife leaned across the corner of the table and touched his arm.

"What on earth are you staring at, Roger?"

He roused himself with a start and laughed apologetically.

"I was thinking—that's all."

"Dreaming, you mean!" she said rather scornfully. "You haven't touched your soup."

It was slowly beginning to dawn upon him that there had been some reason for Cecelie's irritation against him. All his life he had had every wish fulfilled; he could not remember that he had ever done an unselfish or a useful action; he had just spent his money, and lived on and for the good things of the world.

His sister-in-law looked at him and shrugged her white shoulders.

"I hope you haven't caught cold again," she said sharply. "You were outside ever so late this evening, and it gets chilly when the sun goes down. Goodness, look at that girl in the black frock—she upset her soup!"

Buchanan raised his eyes quickly. It was perfectly true; Cecelie had somehow managed to knock the plate into her lap—the hot, greasy liquid was flowing merrily down the skirt of her one and only evening gown.

A couple of waiters hurried toward her agitatedly; Kathy sprang to her feet. Philip's wife laughed maliciously.

"Clumsy creature! I can't imagine why such people come to decent hotels."

Roger felt a sudden rush of sympathetic anger as his eyes fell on Cecelie's face—hot and distressed. She was scrubbing the front of her frock and laughing nervously.

He heard her voice distinctly.

"Please don't bother. It was my own fault—it does not matter at all."

In a few moments the little disturbance had quieted down; dinner was resumed.

As a rule, Cecelie enjoyed her dinner, but to-night she sent course after course away untouched.

When dessert came, Roger, watching, saw the girl Kathy lean across and whisper to her friend.

But Cecelie shook her head; her eyes, hard and defiant, glanced across at Buchanan and met his own. For a moment they looked at each other gravely, and Buchanan smiled involuntarily.

A wave of crimson surged beneath the girl's brown skin—she raised her head defiantly and did not look again in his direction during the remainder of dinner.

When the two girls came from the dining room, Buchanan was in the lounge, reading the evening paper. From behind it he watched Cecelie's tall figure vanish down the long hall and out into the night.

Kathy stood looking after her for a moment; then she gave a half shrug of her thin shoulders and dropped into a chair, opening her book.

Buchanan put down the paper and followed in the wake of that tall, defiant figure.

IT was a lovely night; the sky was clear and star studded; but a fresh breeze was blowing, and the surface of the sea was a mass of tiny, frothy waves. The hotel was built right out on a headland; most of its windows faced the sea—the little town lay huddled at the back of it.

Buchanan walked through the hotel garden, with its tennis lawns and sloping drive, down to the cliff path.

He had no idea which way the girl would have chosen to go, but instinct directed his feet toward the sea.

There is something wonderfully soothing and comforting in the sea; as he walked now, he fancied that the soft sound of the waves on the rocks and sand below sounded like a sympathetic voice. But he reached the end of the jutting headland without overtaking the girl.

He did not know exactly why he had followed her; but he felt vaguely disappointed when, after a moment, he was forced to retrace his steps.

It was very lonely out there on the headland. Buchanan shivered a little and hurried his steps.

Then he stopped dead—and listened.

Somewhere out in the summer darkness a woman was sobbing—sobbing pitifully.

Buchanan felt his heartbeats quicken; he turned from the pathway and struck out across the short grass to the right.

A woman was sitting near the edge of the cliff, her head bowed on folded arms. Buchanan went closer; his steps made no sound on the short, thick grass. When he was quite near he spoke.

"I beg your pardon, but—is anything the matter?"

The sobs ceased as if by magic; she flung up her head with the defiant gesture he knew so well, turning to look at him.

"I thought perhaps you were ill," said Buchanan awkwardly. "It's horribly lonely out here. I hope you won't be offended with me for speaking to you."

"I am not ill," said the girl. There was a quiver in her voice; she wiped her eyes fiercely with her handkerchief.

Buchanan stood beside her uncomfortably. He did not know what to say next, but he knew quite well that he had no smallest intention of going.

"I am staying up at the hotel there," he said, looking back at the big building with its many lighted windows. "I think—haven't I seen you there, too?"

She laughed a little.

"You know quite well you have," she said. "You know quite well that it was I who spilled the soup at dinner. It quite amused everybody, didn't it?" she asked fiercely.

Buchanan made no reply. Suddenly she burst out in a changed voice:

"I wish I'd never come to this place—I hate everybody in the hotel! They are nothing but a set of snobs—" She broke off, biting her lip.

There was a little hillock close beside her; Buchanan sat down on it and stuck his long legs out in front of him.

"Am I included?" he asked after a moment.

She laughed again, rather shamefacedly.

"I ought not to have said that. I am sorry, but sometimes I long to tell all the people who snub me what I really think of them—how I hate their ill-mannered patronage—how I despise them."

"As you longed to tell me what you thought of me when I let the door swing back this afternoon—eh?" asked Buchanan quietly.

There was a little silence.

"I never *meant* to do it, you know," he went on slowly. "It was an accident—I did not know you were behind me; and when I turned round to apologize, you scared me with your angry eyes. I should like to apologize now—if I may?"

"There is nothing to apologize for," she told him ungraciously.

She was wondering in an angry, resentful way why this man had followed and spoken to her, as she was perfectly convinced he had done.

It never occurred to her for one moment that he could possibly have overheard her conversation that evening with Kathy.

"I think there is everything to apologize for," said Buchanan after a moment. "You imagined that I meant to be rude to you; therefore I apologize for my clumsiness in allowing you to imagine such a thing." He paused.

"I am sure you are mistaken about the people in the hotel," he went on hesitatingly. "They really are not at all a bad lot. But, you see—" He paused again, seeking words with which to express himself. "It's just this: how can they or I know that we might not be snubbed if we spoke to you? You look so dignified and aloof, and a man hates being snubbed!

"I'm having a dull time of it down here; I'm on sick leave, you know, and they won't let me play golf or bathe, and there's not much else to do except drive round in the car, and that's mighty slow alone. Several times I've wondered if you—you and your friend would care to come with me."

Cecelie turned her head slowly and tried to see his face through the starlit night.

He met her gaze steadily; whatever were his true feelings, he looked and spoke as if he were sincere.

The girl caught her breath with a little gasp.

"I've never been in anything but a taxi in all my life," she said simply.

The words knocked the wind out of Buchanan's sails; somehow, it was the last thing he had expected her to say. She spoke with childish eagerness.

He felt somehow uncomfortable and ashamed.

"I shall be awfully pleased to take you for a spin if you will allow me," he said gravely. "Are you staying here long?"

"Only two weeks. We came last Friday."

"Oh, yes, I remember!" He remembered that his sister-in-law had designated the two girls as "frumps" when they first put in an appearance at lunch. He had laughed then; now he blushed to remember.

"Do you live in New York?" he asked suddenly.

She hesitated. "The Bronx," she said defiantly.

"Really!" Buchanan was too well-bred to allow his sudden feeling of distaste to creep into his voice. "I know the Bronx rather well," he said.

"I work in Bloomingfield's store," she told him.

"Really!" said Buchanan again. He half smiled in the darkness as he thought of his sister-in-law's triumph could she hear. The first night the two girls came into the dining room Philip's wife had contemptuously designated them as "shop girls."

Cecelie rose to her feet hurriedly.

"I suppose now you wish that you hadn't spoken to me," she submitted bitterly.

Buchanan rose too, hastily.

"I don't know why you are determined to treat me as if I were a cad." His tone was good-natured. "It's not quite fair; I *admire* anybody who can work for their living—I could never do it myself if I lived to be a thousand."

"Because you've never had occasion to, perhaps?"

"Possibly—Providence is kind in so much that it sometimes gives money to the people without brains."

She laughed a little.

"You would not like any one else to say that," she said.

THEY walked back across the grassy slope to the hotel. Cecelie was wondering what excuse he would make not to enter with her, but he made none; he held open the long French window and followed her in, talking all the time.

His brother and sister-in-law were sitting together some little distance away; Cecelie saw the amazed glances cast at her, and she flushed dully.

But Buchanan was quite unconcerned; when she sat down beside Kathy he took a chair next to her.

Kathy stared from one to the other with unfeigned amazement; Cecelie's ways were beyond her. She subsided into her book.

When, at ten o'clock, the two girls rose to go to bed, Buchanan accompanied them to the foot of the stairs. He was quite enjoying his sister-in-law's black looks, and the curious glances of the other women.

He bade the girls good night, and was turning away when Cecelie came back down the stairs and called his name hesitatingly.

He turned at once—she was looking at him with pleading eyes in her proud face.

"You—you won't tell any one about—about where I work, will you?" she asked in a low voice.

Buchanan's face caught the sudden flush from her own.

"There was no need to have asked me that," he said in an offended tone.

He waited till she had disappeared up the broad staircase, then he strolled across to where Philip and his wife sat.

Louise Buchanan treated him to a cold stare as he dropped lazily into a chair beside her.

"I suppose you are pleased, now you have made yourself thoroughly absurd and conspicuous," she remarked icily.

Roger raised his brows. "I don't understand," he said.

She tapped her foot impatiently on the polished floor.

"You know quite well what I mean. You might at least have chosen some one decently dressed if you *must* strike up an acquaintance. Who *are* those girls, I should like to know?"

"I didn't inquire, but I will—if you like," said Buchanan imperturbably. "I am going to take them driving tomorrow in my car."

CHAPTER III

ROSA DESMOND

LOUISE BUCHANAN dabbed her nose viciously with a powder-puff and swung round upon her husband.

It was a few evenings later.

"It's the talk of the hotel!" she said angrily. "Only this morning I overheard that hateful Miss Langley offering to bet her brother that it was 'pulled off' before the end of the week!

"It's your duty to speak to Roger about it, Philip! You don't seem to care in the least what happens. If he marries this girl, what will become of poor little Robbie? Why don't you speak instead of standing there rubbing your chin?"

"It's no business of mine, my dear," said Philip with a shrug of his shoulders. "I'm not the elder son. Roger won't stand any interference from me —or you, for that matter. He's got a perfect right to get married if he wants to, and, after all—Miss Vanstone's quite a decent sort when you get to know her. Don't think much of her pal, but Miss Vanstone's all right."

"In those clothes?" demanded Mrs. Buchanan frigidly. "What a fool you are, Philip! Why, Robbie's nurse is better dressed than she is! I call the whole thing a perfect scandal."

"Robbie's nurse probably has more money," said her husband ruefully. "It takes money to buy clothes like yours, you know, my dear!"

"They had no right to come to this hotel at all," said Louise angrily, dabbing her nose again. "The Vanstone girl is just a common adventuress, that's what she is! Probably saved up for months to come here on the chance of getting a husband!"

Philip laughed good-naturedly.

"Oh, rubbish! Adventuresses dress better than she does, and don't behave so naturally! I rather admire Roger for not caring a hang about appearances. She's the first woman I've ever seen him pay any serious attention to, anyway."

"And she'll be the last, too, unless somebody interferes," his wife declared furiously. "A nice thing to bring a woman like that into the family! Who is she, I'd like to know? Roger won't tell me a word about her—told me to find out if I wanted to know."

"Oh, come! Roger would never be as rude as that."

"Well, that's what he meant, anyway. After the way I nursed him when he was ill—waited on him hand and foot—" Her voice grew angrily tearful.

Philip had walked to the door, but he turned now and looked round at his wife with a frown on his easy-going face.

"Come, come," he said with a touch of irritation in his voice. "Don't drivel, Louise! Roger had a couple of nurses —he'd have died if he'd been left to *your* tender mercies, my dear—eh?"

He laughed uproariously.

Louise stamped her foot.

"You won't laugh so loudly when Robbie is cut out of your brother's will," she stormed. "You won't laugh

when your own allowance is cut in half. We'll have to give up the car." She began to weep hysterically.

Philip came back. He was fond of his wife, though he did not always approve of her. He stooped and put an arm about her white shoulders, where too many diamonds flashed.

"Don't cry, dear," he said remorsefully. "I didn't think you were really so upset about it. Roger isn't married yet, and may never be! Just because he takes a girl for a drive or two—"

"Drive or two! They're always together! Morning, noon and night—*I* know what I am talking about if *you* don't. You can't mistake it when a man is in earnest. I tell you Roger is in love with this girl, and if something isn't done he'll marry her under our very noses!"

Philip lost his temper.

"What the devil do you want me to do, then?" he asked irritably. "I can't forbid him to marry the girl—I can't threaten to have her prosecuted, can I?"

"Oh, of course *you* can't do anything," his wife retorted. "It's never any use asking help of a *man!* They've got no brains. Heaven only knows why I married you!"

"Heaven may not," Philip retorted angrily, "but *I* do!"

His wife looked up with momentary interest.

"Why?" she asked.

"Because you couldn't get Roger—that's why," he said roughly, and slammed the door after him.

Mrs. Buchanan stood staring across the room for a moment with blank eyes; then—

"Brute!" she said viciously.

She dabbed her nose again with the powder puff and dried her eyes carefully; she never cried without an audience, she knew how it affected her looks.

She rearranged her hair, adjusted the diamond necklace, and went slowly downstairs.

IT was an understood thing that Mrs. Philip Buchanan was always late for dinner. She liked to make an effective entrance.

As she made her way through the lounge a girl in a vivid blue frock came toward her. She was the vulgar daughter of still more vulgar parents, and it was her great desire to be taken up by the Buchanans.

"I was just looking for you, Mrs. Buchanan!" she gushed effusively. "Father has some tickets for an entertainment in the town to-night—some dancers—they are only here for one night, and I wondered if you would care to come? I thought perhaps your brother-in-law would come, too."

Mrs. Buchanan hesitated. She disliked this girl almost as much as she disliked Cecelie Vanstone, but in her present mood she thought anything would be preferable to having to spend the evening with the knowledge that somewhere about Roger was making love to Cecelie—and there was just a chance that Roger might accept.

She half shrugged her white shoulders.

"We haven't dined yet," she said deprecatingly. She was one of those women who can never go without her dinner; whatever the important issue at stake, Louise Buchanan would have eaten her way through a menu before she gave it her attention.

"Neither have we," answered the girl eagerly. "But it doesn't begin till nine, so if we get there at a quarter to it will do! We'll go down in the touring car, of course—and it's quite a

little way to the town hall. *Do* come! And bring your brother-in-law."

"Oh, very well," said Mrs. Buchanan ungraciously. "But I can't answer for Roger."

She dismissed the girl with a little nod, and rustled on her way to the dining room.

He could not be mistaken. Here, in the flesh, was Roger's long lost wife!

The head waiter flung open the door for her as if she had been a queen: even head waiters are influenced by diamond shoe buckles and a constant change of toilet.

Philip was scowling; Roger sat opposite, twisting his wineglass in preoccupation.

It was an understood thing that Roger never waited for the rest of his party, though as a rule Philip entered at his wife's heels, carrying her cloak or fan or scent bottle. She had trained him to be a perfect husband as far as small attentions went.

Louise swept past the table where Cecelie and Kathy sat laughing and talking together. Cecelie looked much brighter and happier than on the night when she had spilled the soup.

A kindly chambermaid had sponged away the stain for her, and this evening a bunch of crimson roses, sent by Buchanan, did a great deal toward smartening her frock.

A keen observer might have noticed that she avoided glancing toward the table where he sat; might have noticed, too, how often his eyes turned in her direction.

Louise swept into her chair with great ceremony; she beamed on her husband and his brother, but Philip did not look up.

There had been some truth in

his parting shot; Louise would undoubtedly have married Roger had Roger shown any inclination to marry her. Failing to capture him, she took his brother.

And the marriage had been a success up to a certain point; Louise had grown fond of her easy-going husband, and Philip was proud of his wife. The boy, too, was a strengthening link; in their different ways they both adored Robbie.

"I'm going down to the village with the Smees," Louise informed her brother-in-law. "It's so tiresome! I don't *want* to go in the least, but one is compelled to do these things occasionally. They want you to go, too, Roger."

"No, thanks," said Buchanan quickly. He had already had a taste of Miss Smee's ogling, and was not anxious to repeat the dose.

"You told them that I wouldn't go, of course—didn't you, Louise?" he asked.

"I did nothing of the kind," sharply. "How do I know if you will do a thing or not? Please yourself, of course—you always do."

"Thanks." Roger was glad she would be out of the way for part of the evening, at least. Lately he had sometimes wished her at the bottom of the sea.

"What's on the program?" demanded Philip sulkily. "And why wasn't I asked?"

"Oh, only some dancers!" explained his brother. "I was told about them this morning—but one can always see such things in town."

"I'll come with you if you like, Louise," Philip suggested apologetically. He could never quarrel with his wife for long.

"You must ask Miss Smee," said she coldly. "She offered the ticket to Roger, but as he is such a bear—"

Roger did not hear; he was looking at Cecelie, who had risen from her seat and was walking from the room followed by Kathy.

Cecelie walked with her head high, conscious that many people in the room were talking about her.

A SUDDEN half tender smile crossed Buchanan's face. It was only a week since that night he had first spoken to her out on the cliff; looking back, a whole lifetime seemed to have been crowded into those seven days!

He had started the acquaintance with a half boorish, half mischievous idea of paying her back for what he had overheard her say about him; but fate has a way of stepping in and changing the current of a man's whole life when he least expects it.

Now Buchanan would have found it difficult to say how far he had drifted down the river of dreams in the little boat which Cupid steers so skillfully.

Louise looked at him mockingly.

"No appetite?" she inquired. "You'll have to see the doctor again, Roger."

"I am not hungry," said Roger, and left the table with a murmured apology.

Louise looked after him, anger sparks in her eyes.

"I never thought Roger could be such a fool!" she said, chagrined.

Philip shrugged his shoulders.

"Leave him alone," he advised. "Can I come down to the show with you?"

"If you like; you'd better ask the Smee girl — perhaps she won't want you after Roger—"

But Miss Smee hid her disappointment admirably, if she felt any. It was something, anyway, to be seen in public with the Buchanans, and she rather liked Philip; he could be very amusing when he chose to exert himself.

They drove together in the Smees's luxurious car, and arrived—as Louise had planned—when the show had well begun. The audience all turned interested heads to see who the latecomers might be who were ushered into the front row.

Philip sat between his wife and Mrs. Smee—a good-natured mountain of flesh in canary satin with an amber necklace.

"She looks like an advertisement for somebody's mustard," whispered Louise to him as they sat down.

Philip guffawed; he always laughed at his wife's jokes, and thought them clever. He glanced at the stage, and suddenly his attention was arrested.

"By Jove, what a beautiful woman!" he said.

Louise frowned; it was not often Philip so far forgot himself as to admire any one other than herself. She glanced in the direction of his gaze unwillingly.

There was only one woman on the stage—a dancer, dressed in spangled tights colored to imitate the scales of a serpent.

She was small and beautifully made, with slender, supple limbs and a bewitching face with dark eyes, surmounted by a wealth of auburn hair.

"She dyes it," whispered Louise quickly, her eyes taking in the other woman's beauties at a glance. "And she's awfully made up! Philip, don't stare at her so! Why, what's the matter?—you're hurting my arm!"

Her husband had suddenly gripped her with agitated fingers—he was leaning forward excitedly, staring across the footlights at the stage.

"Good Lord!" he said tonelessly, and then again, "Good Lord!"

"Whatever is the matter?" his wife demanded anxiously. "Sit down, Philip—every one will be looking at you!"

Philip subsided into the chair from which he had half risen, his face white and incredulous.

"I'd know her anywhere!" he muttered to himself. "Anywhere! She's dyed her hair, but I'd know her—"

He came back to the present with a start. He bent toward his wife.

"It's Rosa Desmond," he said in a hoarse, excited whisper. "They said she was dead—we all believed she was dead!

"Good Lord, Louise, don't stare at me so! Don't you know who Rosa Desmond is? Why, the woman Roger married twelve years ago!"

CHAPTER IV

HARD-WON CONSENT

FROM the wide porch which overhung the main door of the hotel, Buchanan watched his brother and sister-in-law drive away in the Smees' magnificent car.

He waited till a bend in the road hid them from view, then gave a great sigh of relief, threw his half-smoked cigar into the gathering darkness, and reëntered the hotel.

A great many people were there, lingering in knots of twos and threes, gossiping and laughing together. Buchanan was waylaid more than once as he moved impatiently between the chairs and couches in search of Cecelie; it was nearly half an hour before

he found himself beside Kathy's chair at the far end of the lounge.

Kathy was reading—as usual.

But this evening she did not greet him with her accustomed cheerful smile; her eyes were grave as she looked up at him.

"Where is Miss Vanstone?" he asked.

"She's gone out," said Kathy. She closed the book with a determined little snap of its cheap covers and sat up very straight.

"I want to speak to you, Mr. Buchanan."

The young man had half turned away. He came back now and looked down at her with surprise; Kathy so rarely spoke to him unless he first spoke to her.

"Speak to me?" he echoed.

"Yes — oh, please sit down — you look so overpowering standing there!"

Buchanan laughed; he sat down obediently across a chair, his arms resting crosswise on its wooden back.

"Well—what is it?" he asked.

But Kathy's eyes were deadly serious; the short, not at all beautiful hands clasping the book in her lap trembled nervously.

"What is it?" he asked again, more kindly.

"That's just what I don't know," said Kathy in distress.

There was a painful streak of color in her honest face; it was evidently by sheer strength of will that she sat there instead of obeying her longing to get up and run away.

"It's about—about Cecelie," she said desperately.

"Cecelie!" He echoed the name with sudden change of voice. He moved his chair a little nearer to her. "What about Miss Vanstone?" he asked urgently.

Kathy had burned her boats now; she rushed on as if afraid her courage would desert her.

"You know what people are saying in this hotel—I mean about the way you and she go about together. You know how ambitious she is—how she longs for all the things she can't have.

"Oh, Mr. Buchanan, sometimes I wish that we had never come here at all. I can't make you understand what I want to, but — please, *please,* don't hurt her! She's my best friend, and I'd do anything to see her happy, and I'm afraid—so afraid—"

She broke off, looking at him apologetically with tears in her eyes.

Buchanan had flushed — there was no mistaking her meaning. He made no answer for a moment; then:

"You mean that you are afraid—of me?"

She nodded.

"Yes—I *do* mean that. We've never known a man like you before. Cecelie could hold her own anywhere, I know, but you see this is only just a flash-in-the-pan for us. We've got to go back to small rooms and the drudgery of a shop, and it's no use pretending that there's anything better waiting for us. Cecelie hated it before, but this will make her a thousand times more discontented. Oh, you're not angry with me! Are you?" she pleaded.

Buchanan took her hand in his.

"I think you're a peach," he said. "And as for Cecelie having to go back to small rooms and the drudgery of a shop—" He paused and drew a deep breath. "It won't be my fault if she does," he added quietly.

Kathy's plain face flushed crimson. She was afraid to think what he meant; her head was in a whirl.

She had liked Buchanan from the first moment of his self-introduction;

but that he had ever meant anything serious by his attentions to Cecelie, she had never dreamed. This sudden knowledge took her breath away—it gave her as great a thrill of pleasure as if she herself had been told that he loved her.

She was one of those wonderfully humble people who can find their own happiness by witnessing the happiness of others.

"Oh, Mr. Buchanan!" she said.

She sat staring after him with sparkling eyes as he walked away.

BUCHANAN turned his eager steps through the hotel garden along the path where he guessed Cecelie had gone. He felt a strange tingling in his veins; his sudden confession to Kathy had added to his eagerness to tell Cecelie that he loved her.

It seemed such a wonderful, beautiful thing!

A few days ago he had never spoken to her—now he could see no happiness in all his life without her.

Already he longed for the time when he would have the right to give her everything she wanted—to dress her as beautifully as Louise was dressed. His thoughts flew ahead to days and months of happiness lying in wait for him.

His wife! In spite of the bitter experience he had had in his foolish youth, his heart had been left untouched.

Passion and infatuation are not love; the memory of that brief madness had left him with no feeling but shame and regret. If only he could wipe them out of his life forever!

He wondered what Cecelie would say when he told her about it—for he had made up his mind that he must tell her. At any rate it could not hurt her as it hurt him to know that a woman—even though she were long since dead and gone—had once cheated him of kisses and embraces.

If only it had never been! It was as if some one threw a long, dark shadow across his newly found happiness. He walked on slowly with downbent head, and—ran full tilt into Cecelie at the bend of the winding path.

He caught her arms and held them gently.

"I have been looking for you everywhere," he said.

She laughed merrily and quietly released herself.

"Have you? I think I must have gone to sleep out there on the cliff—it was so quiet and so peaceful. I was just making for bed."

"Bed!" he echoed, dismayed. "Why, it's quite early."

"It must be past ten," she told him.

He consulted his watch.

"Only nine," he declared triumphantly. "Not your bedtime yet! Come back with me a little way."

She hesitated; she had purposely avoided Buchanan that evening, though she would have found it difficult to say why.

"Please!" he added softly.

They turned together and walked back along the grassy cliff. It was a very quiet evening, warm and still. The faint sound of tiny waves lapping the foot of the cliff broke the silence. Now and then a girl's laugh was wafted to them from the open windows of the big hotel.

Buchanan was very silent—he was quite happy. For the moment he felt content to let things drift. Unconsciously Cecelie herself roused him.

"Hasn't the past week flown?" she asked suddenly. "Only three more

days and then we'll be back in New York! I am due at business on Monday."

There was a touch of defiance in her voice; she had so many times wondered what this man would think of her could he see her standing behind the counter measuring out ribbons.

She had honestly tried to live in the present and forget the life she hated; but now and then it crept back to her like some insidious voice, refusing to be forgotten.

"We've had a lovely time—thanks to you!" she added generously.

"And when," asked Buchanan deliberately, "shall I see you again?"

There was a little silence; then Cecelie managed to laugh.

"Who knows?" she asked with a flippancy she was far from feeling. "I am not likely to meet you at any of the houses where I visit."

"You don't seem very concerned," he answered quickly, stung by her apparent indifference.

She laughed again—a laugh that trailed away into a sigh. "No! Well, what is the use? Ours has just been an ordinary summer acquaintance—very pleasant certainly, but—"

She broke off; he had seized her hands almost angrily.

"Is that all it has been to you?" he asked fiercely. "I don't believe you, Cecelie! It's been the whole world to me! I love you—you know that I love you—and you can stand there calmly and talk about not seeing me again—"

"Not—calmly—" she said breathlessly; she tried to free her hands, but he held them fast. "Listen, Mr. Buchanan! It's quite useless what you are saying—you and I live in different worlds. We've been good friends—just that, but no more. I wouldn't marry you if you asked me!

"Oh, I know you haven't—" she rushed on almost petulantly. "But it would be all the same if you had. I could not bear to be looked down upon by your friends and relations. I should want to murder them—or you!" She tried to laugh, but it rang with the sound of tears. "Please say no more. I shall always remember you. I shall always be grateful to you for making my vacation so happy—but that's all. I'm going back to a second-class department store, and you—"

"I am going to make you my wife," said Buchanan. "Cecelie, you're talking nonsense, and you know it! I love you—and I should love you just the same if your father were a coal heaver. What do you think I care about the shop? What do you think I care what my people say?"

She interrupted swiftly.

"But I do! It may be pride, but I should be utterly, utterly wretched if I knew that your sister-in-law was sneering at me, and saying that you had married a shopgirl! There would be no happiness for either of us. I should come to hate you—"

He laughed tenderly.

"You don't hate me now, then?"

She tried to free her hands.

"Please let me go—" She twisted away from him so that he could not see her face—there were tears in her eyes.

He slipped one arm about her shoulders, forcing her head backward.

"Kiss me, Cecelie—kiss me!" he said hoarsely.

"I don't want to. I can't. Oh, *please* let me go!"

But he held her fast; he was head and shoulders taller. He bent and kissed her lips passionately.

"And now—" he challenged her rather breathlessly. "Dare to say any

more about never seeing me again! You belong to me, and you know you do!"

"I don't. You had no right to kiss me! It was taking a mean advantage."

She was fighting hard for her pride; she told herself that she would never marry this man; she told herself that she would rather be miserable all her life without him than know that his people and fine friends looked down on her.

MOMENTARY anger filled him; he let her go and stood back. His face was white; she glanced at him from under her long lashes half furtively. Suddenly she spoke:

"Oh, don't be angry with me! Can't you see that it is far the best thing for us both just to shake hands and say good-by? We've had a good time together; but you're the sort of man who would soon forget a girl like me."

"You've no right to say that!" he blazed out at her. "You seem bent on making me out to be a cad! You won't believe anything I say. I tell you I love you with every beat of my heart. I never meant to love a woman. I never wanted to—but you have made me, somehow. It's no use, Cecelie—you told me the other day that I was spoiled; that I got everything I wanted. Well, I want *you*—and I mean to have you."

"You won't—"

"Won't I?"

He covered the distance between them with passionate impatience and caught her in his arms. He held her so that she could not move—so tightly that he hurt her; he kissed her face again and again; he kissed her hair and eyes. After a long moment he let her go.

"*Now* say you will not marry me," he challenged her.

Cecelie tried to answer. She tried to believe she was angry—that she hated him; but suddenly she broke into sobbing.

Buchanan was all contrition in a moment; he called himself a brute and a beast. He would have gone on his knees to her with remorse. He said he was not fit to kiss the ground she walked on.

"But I love you so!" he said. "Cecelie—don't ruin both our lives for the sake of what is, after all, only false pride! You can't look me in the face and tell me you don't want me. If you can, I will take it for my answer and never trouble you again."

She stood twisting her hands in an agony of indecision; it hurt, and yet thrilled him with pride to see how changed she was—her proud head drooped. She looked very young and distressed.

Suddenly—

"Oh, are you sure—*sure* that you will never be sorry?" she cried tremblingly. "Oh, I think I'd *die* of shame if I thought you would ever regret it—that you would ever get tired of me!"

He answered her with all a lover's passionate protest, but she was still not satisfied.

"And—have you ever loved any one else?" she asked him.

She hated herself for asking, and yet does not every woman long to know if she is the first in the heart of the man to whom she surrenders her love? And alas! How few there are who can truthfully answer, "Yes!"

There was a little pause—so small that Cecelie did not notice it; then:

"I have never loved any woman in all my life but you," said Buchanan.

They went back to the hotel garden

through the summer night; his arm round her waist, her head on his shoulder.

It was like a dream to Cecelie—a dream when, before they neared the open door, he stooped and kissed her once more passionately with a murmured "Good night." He seemed to guess that she wanted to go the rest of the way alone—that she felt she could not face curious eyes with him by her side.

He stood there, bareheaded in the summer night, and watched her vanish through the door, and there was no premonition in his heart of the dark shadow that had, even then, fallen across his newly found happiness.

CHAPTER V

"IT IS TRUE!"

CECELIE slipped upstairs unnoticed.

She was living and moving in a dream world where nothing was real, nothing of any importance but Buchanan and the way he had held her in his arms and kissed her.

He loved her, and she loved him, and the whole future lay before them, radiant with happiness.

When she opened their bedroom door Kathy was sitting up in bed. She had an open book on her knees, but it was evident that she had not been reading, for the book was upside down.

Cecelie shut the door and walked across the room. She had a horrible feeling that the wonderful thing that had just happened out in the summer night was written all over her in letters of fire. She imagined that the eyes of the whole world—had the world been there—could have read in her face how much she loved and was loved. She could not raise her eyes when Kathy spoke to her.

"I was so tired I came to bed. This place makes me awfully sleepy, doesn't it you? Where have you been?"

"Out on the cliff."

"Alone?"

"No. At least—I—I met Mr. Buchanan as I was coming back."

"Oh."

Kathy pulled nervously at the two thin pigtails of nondescript hair which hung on either side of her shoulders. She was longing to know what had happened, but did not like to ask.

Cecelie began to undress. As she brushed her hair in front of the small mirror her eyes met Kathy's.

Suddenly she threw down the brush, rushed across to the bed, and seized the other girl in a warm embrace.

"Oh, Kathy!" she cried.

"Of course he's asked you to marry him," said Kathy complacently. "I knew he meant to," she added. "I think you're a very lucky girl, Cecelie. He's the nicest man I've ever met, and so rich! What did he say? Does he want to be married soon? You might tell me—I don't suppose I shall ever have a love affair myself."

"He didn't say anything about getting married," said Cecelie in a muffled voice. "I wouldn't listen to him at first—I can't bear to think that his sister-in-law and all his friends will sneer at me, and think he has married beneath him. I told him so, and he laughed, and then he got angry—and then—and then—"

"Such nonsense!" cried Kathy indignantly. "You're heaps younger and prettier than Mrs. Buchanan! She's jealous of you, that's why she's been so horrid. Wait till you're dressed as well as she is."

"*You're* talking nonsense now,"

Cecelie declared, but she was pleased all the same. She was glad that she was pretty for Roger's sake. She registered a vow in her heart that she would make him happier than a woman had ever made a man before.

She disengaged herself from Kathy's arms gently, and stood up rather shamefacedly. She did not as a rule show her feelings.

"I'm an utter fool, I know," she said with a little laugh of self-contempt. "But, oh—I *am* so happy!"

"And so you always will be—with him," said Kathy contentedly. "You just couldn't help it—he's a dear!"

She really thought he was; she was remembering his kindness to her that evening.

"I suppose you won't want me for a friend any longer," she said rather wistfully. "You'll be such a grand lady."

Cecelie turned angrily.

"Kathy! How dare you say such a thing! Why, you'll always be my best friend—whatever happens!"

Kathy snuggled down comfortably under the bedclothes.

"I'm glad of that," she said. "I'd hate you to alter just because you were a Buchanan with heaps of money. Cecelie, do you remember that day in the drawing-room, when you raved against him so and all the things you said? Isn't it queer how people change?"

Cecelie laughed.

"It's just as well to begin with a little aversion," she said airily. "If I'd fallen in love with him at first sight—"

She broke off, self-consciously. "Now I sound as if I'm dying of love for him, don't I?" she queried.

"Well, aren't you?" asked Kathy, looking up from the pillows.

Cecelie stretched her arms above her head and let them fall to her sides slowly.

She walked over to the open window and, leaning her elbows on the sill, stared out at the dark sea, and the tiny line of white where the breakers fell.

She made no answer to Kathy's inquiry, perhaps because she was afraid to say that she could not imagine her life now, without this man who had held her in his arms so short a time ago.

DOWNSTAIRS, in the almost deserted lounge, Buchanan sat in the depths of a big armchair, smoking and dreaming. Several times already he had had to relight his cigar.

He was half ashamed of himself for the way Cecelie had crept into his life. Hitherto he had been singularly independent of women, considering his wealth and eligibility; and yet, what he had missed all these years!

His face glowed as he remembered the last hour out on the dusky cliff. Talk of romance! What could have been more romantic than his meeting with this girl?

But two weeks ago since he had sat under the open window and heard her declaiming against him. He smiled tenderly to himself—some day he would tell her all about it.

What would Louise say? He chuckled lazily at the thought. And Philip? Good old Philip, who was really quite a sport when away from his wife.

As if in answer to his thoughts, Philip walked into the lounge.

He looked oddly flushed and excited. When he saw his brother he stood quite still, as if afraid to come forward. After a moment he was followed by his wife and Miss Smee.

Louise Buchanan swept across to where Roger sat; she dropped into a vacant chair beside him, and loosened her cloak.

Philip followed her sheepishly; he stood beside her chair, fidgeting first on one foot, then on the other.

Roger threw away the stump of his cigar and sat up with a stifled yawn. He wished he had gone to bed; he was in no mood for his sister-in-law's sharp tongue. However, he forced himself to be polite, and inquired how she had enjoyed the show.

"It was worse than I expected," she said calmly.

Philip expostulated.

"Oh, come, my dear, it wasn't so bad—the dancing—" He broke off, obviously embarrassed.

Roger, looking at Louise, was sure that she frowned warningly at her husband.

"Dancing, was it?" he said after a moment. "I thought it was a concert."

"No—dancing," said Philip.

There was a little silence; Miss Smee fluttered toward them. She had taken off her wrap, and repowdered her freckled nose; she stood looking down at Roger now with a simper.

"You ought to have come, Mr. Buchanan!" she gushed. "It was lovely. That Miss Desmond dances divinely! I shall certainly go and see her again when we get back to town."

Roger was frowning slightly.

"I hate dancing," he said with sudden vigor. "The modern day dancing, at any rate—it's vulgar."

"Oh, she wasn't a *bit* vulgar!" Miss Smee protested quickly. "And she's such a lovely woman! Your brother went round and spoke to her after it was over—didn't you, Mr. Buchanan? Wasn't it odd that he should know her?"

"I—I didn't *really* know her," Philip spluttered. "But I thought I'd like to tell her how we'd enjoyed the show." He looked at his brother agitatedly.

Roger laughed.

"Some echo of the past?" he queried lightly.

Philip laughed; the nervous laugh of an embarrassed man. His wife broke into the conversation skillfully and changed the subject.

After a moment's desultory conversation, Miss Smee giggled "Good night," and disappeared.

Philip's wife looked at Roger and drew her chair a little nearer his.

"I want to talk to you, Roger," she said suddenly. Her voice was agitated.

Roger looked at her in surprise.

"It's about—about Miss Vanstone," Louise went on in a low voice. "I know I haven't been exactly nice to her—but—but all along I had a presentiment."

Roger looked up now; he took his cigarette from his lips and stared at his sister-in-law with eyes that grew slowly angry.

"I beg your pardon," he said stiffly.

She made a little impatient gesture.

"Don't take that tone of voice with me. I'm speaking for your good, Roger. You must break off your friendship with this girl at once—before any greater harm is done. People in the hotel are talking already."

Roger rose to his feet; he was really angry now; he looked a little white about the lips.

"I am much obliged to you, I'm sure," he said cuttingly. "As you seem so interested in my affairs, and Miss Vanstone's—you may be interested to know that I have asked her to

marry me, and that she has consented. You may tell any one you please."

"Roger!"

Something in the half stifled cry arrested him in spite of himself. As he was turning away he hesitated, looking down at her apprehensively.

"Well?" he said sharply.

Louise had risen to her feet also; she was a tall woman, and her eyes, half frightened, half angry, looked into his.

"It's impossible! You can't do it. You're not free. You—" she stopped again, afraid to go on.

"Not free? What do you mean?" There was something terrible in the deadly calm of Buchanan's voice, in the set lines of his mouth.

"Why—why—that Rosa Desmond is alive! Your wife. Oh, don't look at me like that—it's the truth I tell you! We saw her this evening. If you don't believe me, ask Philip! He recognized her himself—she was dancing down in the village—he went and spoke to her afterward."

Buchanan's face was terrible; every vestige of color had drained from it, leaving him ghastly. Twice he tried to speak, but no words would come. They stood looking at one another in helpless silence in the deserted lounge.

Louise was very pale beneath all her rouge and powder; she was trembling; all at once she was afraid of this white-faced man. Suddenly she dropped into the chair behind her.

"Ask Philip," she said again. "If you don't believe me—ask Philip!"

The door of the billiard room opened suddenly; the sound of laughter and men's voices momentarily filled the silence, then Philip came out and walked across the lounge toward his wife.

"Thought you'd have gone to bed," he said. "Was going to ask Roger to come and have a hundred up—eh?" He looked from his wife to his brother, and back to his wife.

Louise spoke harshly.

"He doesn't believe me, Philip. I told him about—about Rosa Desmond, and he won't believe me. Perhaps he'll believe *you*."

"Oh," said Philip helplessly. He had turned very red, and his eyes looked horribly distressed.

"Is it true?" asked Roger, and his voice was hoarse.

Philip Buchanan looked all around as if seeking some means of escape—then he shrugged his shoulders.

"Yes," he said. "It is."

CHAPTER VI

THE GORDIAN KNOT

IT was long past midnight; the big hotel was wrapped in darkness and slumber, save in one room, where a light shone out through the open window into the darkness, like a watchful eye; the room where Roger Buchanan tramped up and down, up and down.

He had made no attempt to undress. The diamond studs in his shirt front winked one above the other in the electric light.

His man had been in the room waiting when Roger came upstairs, but had been dismissed impatiently. That was more than an hour ago, and Roger had paced the room ever since, fighting the monster of pain and rage that had fastened upon him so mercilessly; racking his brains for some way of escape from its relentless clutches.

He could not believe it was true! He simply could not! After all these years of fancied freedom, to be dragged back to the bondage which his whole

heart and soul loathed—it *could* not be true!

Some one tapped on the door—the handle turned. Philip thrust a tousled head around the opening.

"Can I come in?" he asked. There was relief in his voice. He came in, shutting the door after him.

He wore a dressing gown with a girdle round his portly middle, and he twisted the tassel nervously as he crossed to the bed and sat down on the edge.

"Go to bed, old boy," he said clumsily. "I've been imagining all sorts of horrors. Louise is worried too—she sent me to see if you were all right."

Roger stopped his relentless pacing up and down.

"All right!" he echoed sharply. "Did you expect to find that I'd cut my throat, or jumped out of the window?"

"Of course not." Philip tried to speak cheerfully, but it was rather a failure. "But you'll feel better in the morning. I'm sorry for you—it's rotten hard luck—rotten hard on Miss Vanstone, too."

Roger's face quivered. "Leave her out of it, if you please," he said curtly.

He was thinking of Cecelie, and of this woman who had crossed his life so strangely again, after years of silence. Thinking of them, and wondering what Cecelie would say if she could know what sort of wife he had taken to himself all those years ago.

It was torture to realize that she would *have* to know—that he would *have* to tell her—that he would have to see the pain and shock of disillusionment in her face. His whole heart and soul cried out in bitter resentment against this cruel ending to his dream of happiness.

"I'm sorry I ever spoke to her," Philip went on in his good-natured, helpless fashion. "She'd never have known you were here if I hadn't gone to the show. She spotted me as soon as I spotted her, and I felt that I was bound to go and speak to her. She asked after you right away! And, like a fool, I blurted out that you were down here with us. I'd rather have bitten my tongue out, if I'd known that you and Miss Vanstone—"

Roger cut him short.

"I'm not blaming you—if you hadn't seen her things would have been worse. I might have got married." He bit his lip hard to keep back a groan.

Philip rumpled his hair and watched his brother gloomily; he had never believed him capable of taking anything so much to heart.

"I know how rotten hard it is for you," he rambled on again.

Roger made an impatient exclamation; he fell to pacing the room again.

"Something'll turn up to put things all right, you see!" Philip began again presently. "Of course I *may* have made a mistake, but I'm afraid it's not very likely," he added gloomily. "She knew me, too, you see. But you go and see her yourself in the morning and make sure. She said she'd be pleased to have you—she asked if you'd altered much."

ACROSS the dividing years Roger was living again the few unhappy months during which this woman had been his wife—the terrible scenes, the hell she had made of his life, the bitter, mad regret he had suffered; his relief when he had heard of her death.

He was wondering helplessly now why she had kept away from him for so long. She knew he was rich, and

yet she had never asked him for money. She must have known, too, that he would have given her every penny he possessed rather than see her again.

"I dare say the law could find some way out of it for you," said Philip helplessly. "Can't you get a divorce, or—or a separation, or something?"

Roger laughed harshly.

"What sort of a release is that?" he asked. "Can I ask a decent woman to marry me after I've been dragged through the mire of the divorce courts? Besides, there's probably no grounds for a divorce. We simply got to hate each other. There was nothing worse."

Philip had reached the end of his suggestions; he sat yawning and rocking to and fro, longing to go back to bed, and yet not liking to leave his brother.

"What are you going to say to Miss Vanstone?" he inquired interestedly after a moment. "You'll have to tell her something, you know. Shall I speak to her for you?"

He made the offer in all kindly good faith, but it was the last straw to his brother's already overloaded burden. Roger strode to the door and flung it open.

"Get out, for God's sake, and leave me to myself!" he said.

Philip climbed off the bed; he was really relieved to be dismissed, but not quite sure if he ought to be offended or not at the manner of that dismissal.

As he passed his brother he stopped as if to say something, then went on again without having said it. Perhaps he saw at last the strain and suffering in Roger's face.

The door shut between them hollowly.

Buchanan stood for a moment in the center of the room, his hands pressed hard over his eyes; then he groped along the wall till he found the switch and turned the light off.

The night porter, going his rounds, passing the door in his soft shoes, stopped for a moment and listened.

"Well, that's queer," he told himself presently as he moved on again. "I could ha' swore that I heard some one cryin'. But it can't ha' been, seein' as that's Mr. Buchanan's room.

CHAPTER VII

TO SEE HIS WIFE

WHEN Cecelie awoke the following morning Kathy was already up and dressed.

She lay for a moment, still half asleep, looking at the other girl with dreamy eyes; then she sprang up.

"Kathy—why didn't you wake me? What time is it?"

She scrambled out of bed, seized with a sort of panic at the thought that she was wasting the day in bed.

"It's half past eight," Kathy answered. "And I saw Mr. Buchanan go along the cliff half an hour ago."

Cecelie scrambled through her dressing, and the two girls went downstairs together.

As they passed the first landing Mrs. Buchanan crossed it in a sumptuous white morning gown; she always breakfasted in her own room, and never put in what Cecelie called "a fully dressed appearance" till luncheon.

She looked at the two girls now, and, to their surprise, bade them a hesitant good morning; it was the first time she had condescended to acknowledge their existence.

"Mr. Buchanan has probably told her," said Kathy in an awed tone as they went on down to the lounge.

"And she thinks she might as well keep in with you, I suppose."

"I don't suppose it's anything of the sort," said Cecelie. "And I'm sure I don't care!"

She swept into the big dining room with her head in the air. Since last night she had risen in her own estimation. Buchanan loved her. He had chosen her before all the beautifully dressed, well-to-do women of his acquaintance.

She took her seat, glancing across to where he always sat, but his chair was empty; only Philip was there eating eggs and bacon at a great rate—his eyes steadily bent on his plate.

Cecelie did not look across again, but every time any one entered the room she thought it must be Roger, and her heart leaped.

She was longing yet dreading to see him again. She was conscious of a new shyness whenever she thought of him. Last night seemed like a dream—she could not really believe that in the broad, unromantic daylight he would look at her with the same love-light in his eyes.

They had nearly finished breakfast when he came at last.

Kathy saw him and nudged her.

"Here he is," she said in a stage whisper, and giggled.

Cecelie felt the blood fly to her face. She could not raise her eyes from her plate—her heart was pounding against her ribs.

Buchanan went round to his table, avoiding passing theirs. Kathy's gaze followed him—there was wonderment in her honest eyes.

Suddenly she leaned toward Cecelie.

"Whatever is the matter with him?" she asked, and there was a frightened tone in her voice. "Oh, Cecelie—he looks so dreadfully ill!"

Cecelie raised her eyes quickly, and across the space which divided their table from the Buchanans her gaze met his.

Kathy had spoken truthfully—he *did* look ill! His face was white and haggard, as if he had not slept for nights. His eyes—

Cecelie nearly cried out as she met their agonized gaze, but it was only for a moment. The next, she told herself that she must have been mistaken—for he was bowing and smiling to her in quite his old manner.

She forced herself to return his smile, but she was conscious of a sort of frozen feeling at her heart—an apprehension of trouble.

She shivered, and Kathy looked at her anxiously.

"Are you cold?" she asked, surprised.

"No." Cecelie looked toward the big window facing the sea. "No," she said again; then vaguely, "the sun's gone in. Look, Kathy! It's quite dark."

Kathy turned her head. "The paper said rain last night," she replied. "Have you finished?"

"Yes."

Cecelie made a movement as if to rise. Buchanan saw it and left his seat hastily.

He came across to the table where the two girls sat; he bent toward Cecelie; he laid his hand over hers as it rested on the tablecloth; afterward she remembered how his fingers shook as they touched hers.

"I have to go down to the village—on business," he said. "Will you be anywhere about when I come back? I shan't be long—about an hour, perhaps."

"Yes; we were going to bathe, but—" She hesitated. "I'll be on the

cliff—near the lifeboat house," she said.

"Thank you."

He went back to his seat, and the two girls left the room.

"I think he looks *frightfully* ill," said Kathy. "Perhaps he caught cold when you were out on the cliffs last night. He doesn't look very strong, does he?"

"Doesn't he?" said Cecelie absently; she seemed hardly to have heard.

ROGER went down to the village without seeing Cecelie again.

He finished his pretense of a breakfast as soon as the two girls had left the room, and flung down his napkin with a sigh of relief. Philip looked at him anxiously.

"What are you going to do?" he asked.

In spite of himself, Roger smiled at the anxiety in his brother's eyes.

"I'm going to see—that woman," he said with difficulty. "Oh, I know I said I wouldn't; but if I don't, I'll never feel satisfied that it is really—my wife. Where is she staying?"

Philip mentioned the road.

"She's only here for three days, so she told me," he said. "There's another woman with her; they dance together. It's one of those houses opposite the shops, backing onto the sea. You know, don't you? No. 25, I think she said."

"I sha'n't forget—and Phil—"

"Yes, old chap?"

"Don't let Louise say anything to—to Miss Vanstone, will you? I'll tell her myself; and don't you say anything, either."

"Of course not; I'll tell Louise—"

He watched Roger leave the hotel and climb the cliff path before he went in search of his wife.

Louise was lounging in her bedroom, reading a novel; she still wore the expensive lingerie morning gown. She looked very handsome, and a little subdued.

"Where's Roger?" she asked as her husband entered.

"Gone to see his wife."

Philip sat down across a chair, straddle legged, and looked out of the window gloomily. "It's hard on him," he said sympathetically.

"It's a piece of luck for us if you could only see it," his wife retorted sharply. "If he'd married that girl we'd have been paupers. As it is, well, Robbie will be all right for years to come, unless Roger makes it up with his wife."

"He'll never do that," said Philip with conviction.

"Well, so much the better for us," she yawned, and turned a page.

"I'm not at all comfortable in my mind about Roger," her husband went on presently; he turned the chair so that he now sat facing his wife. "Suppose he tries to do away with himself?" he suggested solemnly.

Louise laughed, a callous, contemptuous laugh.

"He won't do that," she said carelessly. "And if he did"—her eyes gleamed—"well, then, Robbie would be rich for life."

CHAPTER VIII

THE TRUTH OR A LIE?

THE gorgeous early morning had changed to cloud and gloom as Roger went down the village street.

A chill wind blew in from the sea; the smooth water was already ruffled by tiny flecks of foam.

Roger walked on, but his steps lagged now. He was in no hurry to reach the row of houses that backed onto the sea. His heart beat chokingly in his throat; he felt as if he were being driven to look at a corpse which had been long buried and forgotten.

A foolish-eyed girl led the way into the front sitting room, opened the door without ceremony, and announced his name.

Roger realized in a flash that he had been expected. For a moment the room swam giddily before him; when it steadied again, the door had been shut behind him, and a woman had risen from a chair by the window.

He wondered that he had not seen her as he walked up to the front door; he did not know that there was hate in his eyes as he looked at her across the room.

There was a little breathless silence; the woman was standing with her hand resting on a chair back. She was a beautiful woman; her skin was smooth and fresh, her deep eyes velvety brown and long lashed.

In the matter of mere beauty she would have put Cecelie Vanstone hopelessly in the background; and yet, as he looked at her, Buchanan's heart was one hopeless, longing cry for the girl waiting out there for him on the cliff.

For a moment his eyes scrutinized the face before him as if asking, pleading desperately for denial to the conviction that had all along been in his soul; then he drew a long breath.

"So it *is* you," he said. "I hoped to God it was not!"

She laughed nervously, went back to the seat in the window, and looked at him with a sort of bravado.

"Odd, isn't it, our meeting after all these years?" she said.

"I thought you were dead."

"You mean that you hoped that I was," she corrected.

"Yes," he admitted roughly.

She laughed again.

"Philip was more polite than you; he said I was better looking than ever," she declared.

"Where have you been all these years?" he asked jerkily, ignoring her words. "Nine years since I heard of you. Where have you been?"

She nesitated.

"I've been all over the world. You used to say I'd never amount to anything as a dancer, didn't you? Well, you're wrong. I'm going to be somebody before I go under. I have a New York contract for this autumn."

Her lovely eyes sought his face, half abashed. "You ought to be proud of me!" she challenged him.

"*Proud* of you!" There was loathing in his voice.

She flushed.

"You don't love me any better?" she said in a hard voice. She rose suddenly and came to stand close beside him. "You used to love me once, you know," she said in a dangerously quiet voice. "Do you remember when we first knew each other? Do you remember that evening we walked—"

She broke off.

"I remember everything," said Buchanan harshly. "I only wish to God I did not. I was a fool." He laughed suddenly, thinking of Cecelie. "Do you remember the last time we met?" he challenged her roughly. "The way you raved at me—the things you said? You gave me a foretaste of hell."

She shrank a little from him.

"You blame me, when the fault was yours! I would not have married you, but you forced me to. Perhaps you have forgotten that—have you? Forgotten the love-sick, passionate boy

who begged me not to break his heart and ruin his life?" Her voice changed suddenly, the glorious eyes clouded. "Poor Roger," she said softly. "You were only twenty then, or was it nineteen?"

He did not answer—he hated it all, this scene, with its memories—memories of which he was ashamed now, to the depths of his soul. He looked at the woman who was his wife dispassionately; she was more beautiful than he remembered her, but her beauty left him cold. He only remembered that she stood between him and the girl he loved and desired with all his manhood.

He looked away from her, conscious of the rage and hatred in his eyes.

"Poor old Roger!" she said again lightly. "It's hard on you, isn't it, after all these years?"

She paused then. "Is there another woman?" she asked.

Roger gritted his teeth.

"No," he said hoarsely. He could not bring himself to speak of Cecelie.

"Well?" she queried, perched herself on the arm of a chair and looked up at him. "What are you going to do about me?" she asked.

"Do about you; what do you mean? If you want money—"

She interrupted him. "I don't! I can make all I want! I might have had thousands of dollars out of you these last ten years if I'd chosen."

She paused. Suddenly she slipped a hand through his arm and leaned forward, so that the scent of her hair reached him.

"I'm your wife, when all's said and done, you know, Roger," she said softly.

For a moment he stood, turned to stone, then he flung her off so violently that she nearly fell.

"If that's all you want of me, you may as well know once and for all that I'd rather blow my brains out than live with you again," he said. He was panting as if he had been running. His eyes blazed in his white face.

She shrank back in her chair with a little cry of terror, and flung up her hands before her face. When she looked up again the room was empty—he had gone.

BUCHANAN went down the little village street blindly. His blood was on fire; his one conscious thought that he could sympathize with any man who murdered such a woman as the one he had just left.

He knew her every thought and pretense; knew that she had hidden her real self from him during the last few moments, as she had done many times before in the almost forgotten past; he knew the real woman that existed beneath her beautiful exterior. The heartless, spiteful, selfish creature who had ruined his early manhood.

If only she had died, as he had believed. If only Philip had not gone down to that entertainment last night and recognized her, he might still have been living in his paradise!

His *Fool's* Paradise—for that is what it would have been. Sooner or later this woman, who still bore his name, would have found him out—would have heard of his intended marriage, and then—if only it had happened a day earlier—if only it had happened an hour earlier! Before he had told Cecelie he loved her, had made her admit that she loved him.

At the very moment when Cecelie had been in his arms, Philip had been down in the village, telling the woman who was his wife that she was more beautiful than ever!

Oh, what irony of fate! What bitter irony!

And now he had to go back to where Cecelie waited for him on the cliff, happy and confident of his love, and tell her—tell her what?

That he was already married! That his wife was a dancer down in the village! That he had once believed he loved her with his whole heart and soul!

He shuddered as he thought what such a confession would mean. Cecelie would despise him—perhaps hate him. He would see the shy happiness in her sweet eyes turn to bitter scorn and rage that he had so trapped her.

Buchanan's whole heart cried out against it, "I can't—I *can't!*"

All their lives they must live apart—longing for each other—not daring to meet. It would ruin his life—it would break her heart.

If he could only spare her! In the longing to save her pain he forgot himself; as he walked along he racked his brains for some way of saving her pride, if, indeed, that were the best he could now hope for.

She was young—she would forget him—ah, but he did not wish her to forget him! How could he bear to know that she was deliberately pushing him out of her heart—shutting him out of her life?

And then, all at once, he remembered that evening when he had sat under the hotel window and listened to her clear, young voice scornfully condemning him:

"I only wish I were one of the women he condescends to flirt with here. I should just love to lead him on, and make him care for me, and then turn round and tell him what I really thought of him."

He had laughed at her angry words then; since he had remembered them many times and smiled tenderly at the memory. But now they seemed like a weapon placed in his hand.

Those words were his loophole—and hers! He would tell her that he had overheard that conversation with Kathy—that he had wished to make her pay for it—that he had never been serious.

She would think him a cur and a cad—she would hate and loathe him; but pride would help her forget it. She was very proud. He rightly guessed that Cecelie would rather die than let him know that he hurt her.

But she would think him a cad—an unutterable cad!

How could he bear that from the woman he loved with his whole heart and soul? How could he go on living, and know what she thought of him, even though they never met again? He set his teeth and clenched his hands into fists.

Which was the better way? To tell her the truth and send her away from him to a life of loneliness until such time as she forgot him, or—or to *lie* to her?

He reached the end of the village and climbed the cliff path without making a decision; he felt as if he were torn in two. It would have been so much easier to cross the dividing grass patch and walk to death over the cliff edge than face Cecelie's happy eyes with the knowledge in his heart of what lay before them both.

Separation—final, everlasting separation, was what they had to face, either way. The only remaining question, then, was how to make it easier for her.

He began the slow descent toward the hotel and the lifeboat house. In a few moments he would see her.

Some one called his name softly.

He looked round and saw—Cecelie standing there behind him!

SHE was alone. For a moment Buchanan was conscious of a wild hope that Kathy was with her; now it had come, he longed to stave off for a short time longer the inevitable and tragic ending of his short-lived romance.

But Cecelie was alone.

She stood on the little hillock slightly above him; her slim figure in its white frock silhouetted against the dull gray background of sky.

She wore no hat, and her hair was ruffled by the cool breeze; there was a faint flush on her face, and she breathed quickly as if she had been running.

"You walked so fast," she said, laughing. "I had to run to catch up with you."

He looked away from her.

"I did not expect to see you here; you said farther down, near the lifeboat house." He was painfully aware of the forced formality of his voice; he moistened his dry lips.

"I hope you have not been waiting long," he went on constrainedly. "Will you walk down with me?"

A sudden shadow crossed the girl's bright face. She fell into step beside him, and they walked silently down the grassy slope.

Suddenly:

"Oh, is anything the matter?" she appealed wistfully. "Has anything happened?"

Buchanan's face was averted, but she saw a little muscle leap in his thin cheek as if his jaws were tightly clenched. She could not know that he had dreaded this beyond measure—that she would so appeal to him.

With warm impulse she suddenly slipped her hand through his arm.

Buchanan drew a hard breath; he had never known Cecelie in this mood before. He had first loved her for her spirit of waywardness; he loved her now a thousand times more for her sudden womanly tenderness and anxiety for him.

Desperate longing to tell her the whole miserable story nearly unmanned him. To tell her that he loved her better than life itself; to beg her not to judge him harshly—not to hate him now or afterward.

But in his man's blind way he believed it would be kinder to give her pride and anger with which to fight what lay ahead of them both.

He jerked his arm free; he had an anguished consciousness that the blow must be struck at once or not at all. Her hand slipped down again to her side.

"I—I don't know what you'll think of me, Miss Vanstone," he began dully. "I don't know how to tell you; I am ashamed to my very soul—" He could not continue.

Cecelie had gone very white. That "Miss Vanstone" had been kind, inasmuch as it had warned her of what might be coming. She stood quite still.

"Please go on," she said.

He faced her with desperation in his eyes.

"It's just this, that what happened between us last night must be forgotten and wiped out. I ask your pardon on my knees. I have behaved like a cad and a cur. Two weeks ago you and your friend were in the hotel drawing-room together. Perhaps you remember?"

He saw that she did; he saw that she was bracing herself for his next words,

and he rushed on, hardly conscious of what he said.

"I was sitting outside the window and heard what you said. You called us a set of snobs; you said I was an insufferable prig; that—that—" He nearly broke down at sight of her stricken face, but forced himself to continue.

"You said that you would like to make me care for you—*flirt* with you, was what you said—so that you could lead me on, and then turn round and tell me what you thought of me. You said—

"Oh, my God!" he broke out in agony. "Say something! Call me a brute, a cad—call me what you like, but *don't* look at me like that! Cecelie, Cecelie—"

A seagull wheeling inland from the gray sea screamed as if in derision.

Buchanan had taken a step toward the girl, but she drew back from him with a sort of horror.

"And so—so it's all been pretense," she said in a lifeless voice. She spoke slowly, and with a little pause between each word, as if she found utterance difficult.

It was no different from what Buchanan had expected; he had dreaded her anger and contempt, but now, standing there with her stricken eyes on his, he almost prayed for them—prayed that she might turn and rend him, hurt him, *kill* him with her biting scorn—anything, anything but this dumb suffering.

"I don't deserve that you should ever forgive me," he stumbled on. He was trying to rouse her, trying to goad her into retaliation. "I've done a despicable thing; I shall never forgive myself. But you must have known all along that it was impossible—I thought you did know! There is such a difference in our stations of life—you said so yourself—such a difference in our friends—"

He had struck the right chord at last. He saw the sudden flame of passion that leaped to her face. She took a step toward him, her slender hands clenched into impotent fists; her lips were as white as the frock she wore.

"Oh!" she gasped. "If I could only kill you! If I could only *kill* you—"

She stood swaying for a moment, a blaze of madness in the eyes that he had hitherto only known as smiling and beautiful; then she turned and ran from him like one distraught; ran on and on down the grassy slope and across the cliff path toward the hotel, never stopping, never once looking back.

He hesitated no longer, but lifted her in his arms and started for the street

The Debt She Paid

Cinderella in quest of romance lost her slipper in a palace. Helen lost hers in the subway!

By C. Lent

TO make good in these United States, all you need is nerve. Mix a little gray matter with a lot of courage and let Nature take her course.

Helen Quinn had courage, lots of it. When her father, a brakeman, was killed in a wreck, it took courage for the motherless girl just to go on living. Sad but undaunted, she finished high school, though it meant having to go to work as a mother's helper to earn the needed money.

She was a good-looking girl, eight-

een, and as ambitious as Napoleon, when she graduated. But the opportunities her home town offered an ambitious kid were nothing to get excited about. Helen had taken the commercial course as well as less useful subjects; she was a demon with her typewriter, and never had trouble with her shorthand. However, there were only three firms in the little city where she stood a chance of obtaining employment and the prospects of advancement with any of them were not so good.

She could teach school, but she could not see what that would get her. She was facing facts, so she considered matrimony. Her chances of marrying a boy in the Country Club set were exactly zero. The rank and file of those who were left did not appeal to her. She reached the only possible conclusion: she must emigrate.

She had a little of her father's insurance money left, she could pound a mean typewriter, and she had her looks. Most girls so situated would have chosen Hollywood. She aimed higher than that, and decided on New York.

The railroad her father had worked for gave her a pass as far as Kansas City, and secured her a half-rate ticket from there to New York. She sat up two nights in a free chair car on the cheapest and longest route, reaching the metropolis at seven thirty one Thursday morning. By nine she was in the employment office of the Y. W. C. A., and not till she had registered for a job did she have breakfast.

Helen did not wait for the Y to place her; by Tuesday of the next week she got a job unaided, with a Wall Street firm of bankers and brokers. She wrote to her doubtful friends at home — on the firm's stationery— that she was placed, and bent all her energies to learning the language of her new job.

In six months she had her first raise, and deserved it.

New York did not frighten nor awe her. She had a firm belief that folks were folks wherever they lived. She wondered why so many people had warned her about New York. It was big, yes, but it was easy to make good here, and there was nothing to be afraid of.

She discovered that employees were encouraged to be thrifty and to open accounts with the savings department of the firm. Each week she deposited a fixed percentage of her salary and watched her account grow with keen satisfaction. Her office had never been busier. Telephones rang; tickers clattered; messenger boys rushed in and out; the clerical force worked at top speed. A tremendous bull market was in full swing. Night after night she stayed and worked overtime for one dollar an hour and her supper. Fattened by this generous overtime money, her savings grew.

Smarter people than Helen thought things were to go on this way indefinitely. The crash came without warning. One day her office was in a frenzy to catch up with the work that must be done; the next, her firm's sensational failure for millions was blazoned across every newspaper in town.

Helen was minus her job and her savings. She knew that there were other jobs, but the loss of her savings was a body blow. Her frantic inquiries brought the information that she might receive ten cents on the dollar at some time in the distant future. As a matter of fact, it was less than five cents on the dollar by the time the receivers sent out those checks, and by

then she was past caring what was saved from the wreck.

HELEN found herself up against it. Her very thrift had proved a boomerang. Had she not so eagerly added to her bank account each pay day she would have faced this emergency with more money in her purse, more clothes in her wardrobe. She was frightened for the first time since she came to New York when she found that twenty-three dollars and sixty-seven cents represented her entire capital. Her bank book with its lying figures was a mockery.

Because she had to, she started to find another position the day receivers took possession of the Wall Street offices. At the employment agencies she was not encouraged. Business was bad, the crash in Wall Street had affected every line of business, she was told. The outlook for speedy employment was not encouraging. At the Y a harassed official strongly advised her to go home for a time. Helen did not bother to explain, but promptly registered at three other agencies, read the want ads in the newspapers, and walked miles each day in her search of a job. Day by day, in spite of Spartan economy, her funds dwindled.

Ten days later she had exactly three dollars and eight cents in her purse when the Y sent her to a big down town bank. Walking from the Y to Wall Street was out of the question. She hurried into the cafeteria and had a cup of coffee and two rolls. She knew that it was not sensible to go to so vital an interview feeling faint. This cost ten cents. Two dollars and ninety-eight cents was her capital as she started down the subway stairs—two dollars and ninety-eight cents, and she had no one in the world to whom she could appeal for more. Pride prevented any word of her plight going to her home town. The people there were kindly; they would not refuse her aid, but Helen flushed as she remembered the letters she had written home about her success. No, a thousand times no, she could not write for aid. She had no friends in New York, only acquaintances.

As she waited for a subway train she thought, "Suppose this place is filled when I get there, or suppose I fail to qualify?" Resolutely she put these thoughts from her, held her head high, and whipped up her flagging courage.

She felt very small and insignificant as she entered a down town Lexington Avenue express, not at all the cocksure young lady of ten days before. She looked at her watch; it was ten thirty, and her appointment was for eleven thirty. She had ample time. She wondered if she could pawn her watch and the few other articles of value she owned if the worse came to the worst. Every fiber of her soul revolted at the thought of such a necessity, but she considered it.

The train halted between Fourteenth Street and Brooklyn Bridge; she wondered apprehensively if there would be a subway block. She knew from reading the papers that they did happen at times. After a few minutes the train started and hurtled on its way down town. It was ten forty when they drew into the Wall Street station. Helen hurried to the center door, which for some reason stuck and failed to open. The guard called from the vestibule, "That door not working! This way out." Nervously, almost in a panic, she hurried down the car, followed by a dozen other impatient passengers. Some one trod on her heel. She plunged

forward and was out on the platform, and the door had closed behind her before she realized that in treading on her heel the person behind her had caused her to lose her shoe.

Frantically she turned and beat on the closed door with her fists. She must recover her shoe—why, she could not take a step without it! But the train was in motion and slowly gathering headway, moved out of the station. She was left standing with her shoeless foot drawn up under her skirt. She lost her balance and would have fallen had not a young man sprung to her aid.

She had been anxious these last few days, worried, nervous, but she had kept her courage. As a realization of her predicament came over her, every bit of courage left her. A glance at the station clock told her it was ten forty-three; her appointment was for eleven thirty. There was not time to return to her room, get another pair of shoes, and be back to the bank in time, even if she could make the journey minus one shoe. In no bargain basement, even if there was one near by, could she buy a pair of shoes suitable to go job hunting in for as little as two dollars and ninety-three cents, which was all she possessed. A wave of black despair swept over her, and the face she lifted to the young man frightened him. Never had he looked at such woe.

Impulsively he hastened to reassure her:

"Come. It's not as bad as that. I will help you to the street and we'll call a taxi. There is sure to be a place close by where you can buy a pair of shoes."

"Thank you. I won't trouble you. If you will help me over to that bench, please. I feel a little faint."

With his help and with something like a hop, skip, and a jump she made the bench. He stood hesitating before her.

"You've been very kind. I'll be all right now. I mustn't keep you. Thank you so much."

This could be construed as nothing but dismissal, but the young man lingered, hesitated.

"But what will you do? You can't stay here, you know. You need assistance to reach the street."

Instead of replying to him, Helen's glance swept the clock. It was ten forty-nine. In forty-one minutes she was due at the bank for her interview. She could not go shoeless; even she had not the courage for that. She looked up at the young man. She must get rid of him; she knew she was going to cry in a moment, and she wanted no audience.

"Please go — you can't help me—nobody can."

At the thought of how true this was, she began to cry.

IN all his life the young man had seen few women cry. Mazie Cornell had cried with pain when she sprained her ankle on the tennis court; his mother had wept bitterly when his father died. But sincere as had been his mother's grief, it lacked the poignancy and hopelessness of this girl's woe.

A crowd began to gather, a wondering crowd that quickly became a resentful one. He sensed that in the unreasoning way of crowds it blamed him for this girl's distress. This alarmed him, for he was a very correct young man, indeed. He was torn between the desire to escape and a sincere wish to be of service. He stood for a moment undecided as he fought back the impulse to run away.

Each moment the crowd grew; recruits poured from every train that pulled into the station, and thronged down from the street and through the noisy turnstiles. It would not be long before some member of the crowd, more bold or more officious than the rest, would start to question him. He came to a quick decision, leaned over the forlorn Helen and spoke sharply:

"Miss, you simply can't stay here. Just look at that crowd! We've got to get out of here."

Helen continued to cry and did not look up.

Angry and uneasy, he spoke to her again. This time there was more than authority in his voice; there was impatience and a touch of anger. He did not relish his position, but his code did not permit him to go off and leave this weeping girl. A silly little fool, no doubt, but surely in trouble.

"Don't act like an hysterical fool! If you don't stop crying instantly, some idiot is going to call a policeman and we'll be even worse off. Snap out of it! We've no time to lose."

It may have been his tone; it may have been the word policeman; it may have been the staring eyes of the crowd. Helen took one startled look at the ring of curious strangers and rose quickly to her feet—no, of course not, to her foot, and clutching the young man's arm, started her hop, skip, and jump toward the nearest exit.

Too late, though. The young man had been a true prophet, for a red-faced woman intercepted them. Her acquaintance with the more lurid brand of movies had taught her to be suspicious of men, particularly of well-groomed ones. She considered this very correct young man in a brown tweed suit, brown overcoat and brown hat, a suspicious character. Indignantly she planted herself between them and the exit. The young man was never sure whether her red face was caused by indignation or overeating. Whatever the cause, it was violently red.

"Where are you taking that girl, young man?" she demanded.

They paused because they had to. The woman was in the way. The correct young man bowed, and replied:

"To a shoe store, madam. It will give me great pleasure if you will accompany us there and give this young lady the benefit of your excellent advice."

If there was irony in his speech she failed to perceive it. She looked at him suspiciously; he stood hat in hand awaiting her decision. Her fighting air vanished. She did not really grow smaller, though to Helen she seemed to collapse like a pricked balloon. Mollified, she said hurriedly:

"Oh, thank you. I'd really like to oblige you and the young lady, I really would, but I'm on my way to Brooklyn, and I'm late now. My sister-in-law lives over there, she telephoned me, I said I'd be right over. I really can't stop for anything. You see, my sister-in-law isn't very well. She's been to three specialists, and they can't tell her what's the trouble. When she needs me, I can't refuse, and I must hurry on—"

"Sorry, so sorry," the young man said.

Helen added her word of reassurance:

"I lost my shoe. This young man has been very kind. You needn't worry about me. I'll be all right."

She knew that she would not be all right, but she had to say something; she must get away from the staring crowd. She resumed her halting way

toward the exit. The red-faced woman retreated before them, saying vaguely:

"I see."

A down town train rolled into the station just then and the woman lumbered toward it. She was no longer indignant; she was as complacent as is a Boy Scout after accomplishing his daily good deed. Suffused with the glow that comes from duty well done, she disappeared through the open door of the train.

The gun did not frighten Helen. She struck him again

HELEN looked up at the young man and laughed; yes, actually laughed. It was partly relief that they had rid themselves of interference, and partly recollection of how very like a turkey gobbler the lady had looked when she barred their way. The young man laughed back at her, murmured, "Attagirl!" and in a moment more they were through the turnstile and at the foot of the stairs leading to the street.

The crowd behind them pressed on their heels impatiently, for their progress was slow. When Helen forgot and put her unshod foot down to steady herself, some one stepped on it and brushed past her without a word of apology. She cried out with pain, and the young man came to another of his quick decisions. Without so much as a by-your-leave, he picked her up in his arms and carried her up the stairs and to the edge of the sidewalk and looked about for a taxi.

Protesting, blushing, Helen slipped from his arms. She stood beside him

teetering on one foot, trying to summon up the courage to tell him there was no need of a taxi. She meant to thank him and dismiss him, but a hurrying passer-by jostled her, and she had to clutch his arm for support. She found it difficult to get rid of him, for he did not even look at her; his eyes were busy searching for a taxi. A cab drew up beside them in answer to his signal. The door was open; she was lifted in, was seated, the young man beside her, before she could frame an excuse or protest.

"The nearest shoe store, a women's shoe store," the young man directed the driver.

The cabman grinned, drove three doors down the block, and stopped before one of a chain of famous shoe stores. Helen looked in terror at the window where was displayed a bewildering array of shoes. A large sign announced the fact that here were bargains: a special sale—a remarkable sale—every pair of shoes reduced to nine dollars and seventy-five cents. But you may remember that she had exactly two dollars and ninety-three cents in her purse.

"Wait for us," the young man ordered.

"But—" exclaimed Helen with another look at the show window and thoughts of her available funds.

"But what? You have to have shoes, don't you?"

Helen could not deny that, and she simply could not explain there on the street. The taxi man looked all ears; people were passing close by. Helen looked at the back of the driver's head critically; his ears stuck out like wings on either side. She wondered why they hadn't done something about it when he was a baby. Oh, why think of such a thing at such a time?

The young man was waiting, holding out his hand. Perhaps an explanation would be easier in the seclusion of the shop. She didn't have to buy. Plenty of people walked out of stores to go elsewhere, and she might think of some way to dismiss the young man without explaining; so she accepted his help, hobbled into the store and sank into a chair. A boyish clerk bowed before her. If he was surprised at her shoeless state he did not show it by as much as a flicker of his eyelash.

"This young lady lost her shoe in the subway," her escort explained. "Something as like the shoe she has on as you have."

He looked at Helen inquiringly. She could only nod her head. The clerk put a foot rest in front of her, leaned over, removed her shoe, looked inside it with an expert eye, then leaped up a ladder like a squirrel running up a tree. Helen was left alone with the young man. Desperately she turned to him.

"I've been trying to tell you. I can't get a pair of shoes here. They're too expensive. That's why I cried. I was on my way to see about a position. I lost my old one. It wasn't my fault—the firm failed—I wasn't discharged. I lost the money I was saving, too. That's why I cried. I wasn't being an hysterical fool, and it's too late now for me to keep my appointment about the new position. I was to be there at eleven thirty."

Humiliated, Helen looked as if she might cry again.

The young man flushed when she quoted his remark about the hysterical fool; opened his mouth as if to speak, closed it again, looked at his watch and exclaimed:

"You can make it yet. It's only eleven seven. Grab the first pair that fits. Let me be your banker in this

emergency. Hop into a taxi and we'll get there in short order. Where is it you're to be at half past?"

"The Seventeenth National Bank on Wall Street."

He nodded his head in approval. "That's a good bank, a big one. You mustn't pass up that chance. It's within a block or so—we can make it easily."

Helen shook her head. "No, thank you. I couldn't let you. You're most awfully kind and I do appreciate it, but I couldn't permit you to. Let me pay you for the taxi. I'll be all right. Will fifty cents be right? Is that enough?"

She fumbled in her bag, opened it, took out half a dollar, subtracting fifty cents from two dollars and ninety-three cents as she did so, and held it out to him.

He turned a deeper red and brushed her hand aside.

"But what will you do?"

"I'll get back to my room, get another pair of shoes there, and to-day or to-morrow I'll find a place somewhere else."

The young man lost his temper again.

"You'll do nothing of the kind!" he said roughly. "The Seventeenth National is one of the best. You're not going to pass up this chance. It's a loan. The circumstances are exceptional. You can pay me back later. For pity's sake don't argue! For one thing, we haven't time. It's eleven twelve now."

He was masterful; he wouldn't listen to a word. He harried the boyish clerk; she couldn't make a scene. A pair of shoes was bought in record time, paid for by the young man; the old shoe wrapped and handed to him. Breathlessly Helen was hurried into the waiting taxi and a dollar bill was pressed into the driver's hand as the address of the Seventeenth National was given.

"It's eleven twenty-six," the young man announced. "You'll make it yet!"

In that short ride Helen managed to stammer out incoherent thanks. A little, a very little, of her story went with the thanks. The loss of her savings, the anxiety of the past ten days. She could not bear to have him think there had not been a reason for those tears. As she talked her bag was open, her mirror and compact in her hands. Swiftly she repaired the ravages as he sat with his watch in his hand. He nodded absently once or twice, but never took his eyes from his watch. She was not sure how much he heard of what she told him.

It was eleven thirty-three when she entered the bank. A hearty handclasp as he wished her good luck and thrust the parcel containing her one shoe into her hands, a murmur of gratitude and he was gone.

HELEN'S interview was over, the position secured, before she remembered that she did not know his name, nor where he lived, and she owed him nine dollars and seventy-five cents and whatever the taxi had cost.

When she reached home and unwrapped the shoe she found that she owed him more than that, for tucked away in its toe was a twenty-dollar bill. She found it useful before she received her first pay in the new place. She owed an unknown young man twenty-nine dollars and seventy-five cents, plus what the taxi cost, plus her job; for, unaided, she would never have kept that appointment. How could she ever repay him?

During the next few months she looked for him everywhere. In the

subway going to and from her work she searched the faces of her fellow passengers. When she went to lunch each day she was on the alert for him on lower Broadway or Wall Street. But there are almost seven million people in New York, and never a glimpse had she of her kind young man. Folded in a special compartment of her hand bag she always carried three crisp ten-dollar bills awaiting that meeting, instantly available to repay that loan.

New York is big, but some one has said that if you stand at the corner of Broadway and Forty-Second Street you will sooner or later see every one you know pass. But Helen's haunt was the Wall Street district during working hours and the Y. W. at night. The Y. W. is fine, but it is not a place where one meets men. Young girls, girls not so young, fat girls, scrawny girls, blond girls and brunettes, but no men. So the chances of Helen's meeting her young man at Broadway and Forty-Second were not good. The chances were against it, but one never knows, does one?

The Seventeenth National had a branch on Fifth Avenue just above Forty-Second Street. The secretary to its manager was not an earnest worker like Helen. Oh, not at all like Helen. She liked her pay envelope, and that was about all she did like about her job. One night she went out to make whoopee and made it. She dined and danced; she went on to the theater with the young man she had made up her mind to marry. She was in the process of making up his mind that he wanted to marry her. The affair was in that borderland of romance where a proposal was trembling on the young man's lips. Possibilities were in the air. She was reluctant to go home after the theater, he even more so. They danced again.

The next morning she awoke and groaned at the thought of going to work. She ran over rapidly in her mind the excuses she had used recently for absences and decided this time to have a toothache. Her mother telephoned the office that she would not be able to be there; her daughter had a toothache and simply must see her dentist.

The manager requested a secretary *pro tem* from the main office, and Helen was sent uptown to him. At noon she started out to find an inviting place for lunch, and had not gone a block when she saw her very correct young man getting into a taxi.

She gave one incredulous look: she was not mistaken—it was he! There was a lady with him, but she did not hesitate. She had been searching for him too long to let this chance escape. She ran up to him and laughingly grasped his arm. It surprised her to feel the frightened start he gave. He must either be very nervous or have a bad conscience.

"At last I've found you. Oh, but I'm glad!" she cried.

The young man turned, recognized her, and for a moment his face lit up with pleasure. Then it froze into a look of annoyance. Apparently a dig in the ribs by the lady who stood beside him had something to do with this change of countenance.

For a moment Helen continued to gaze into his face with a look of laughing comradeship; then his forbidding expression had its effect and she sobered and became most dignified.

There was an awkward pause that the young man did nothing to make less awkward. He then raised his hat impersonally and said coldly:

"Aren't you mistaking me for some one else?"

Helen was indignant at this, and the hostile glance of the woman with him did not add to her composure.

"Why, I can't be mistaken. I lost my shoe. Surely you remember? You were so very kind."

"Your shoe? I'm sorry—afraid I don't remember." He turned to enter the taxi. The woman urged him in ahead of her, seemed impatient to be off; she threw a glance of disdain over her shoulder at Helen.

It was not till then that an explanation suggested itself to the girl.

"He's married. He's henpecked," she thought. "This is his wife with him. He's afraid she'll learn that he bought me a pair of shoes and loaned me money."

She wondered why she should have that all-gone feeling at the pit of her stomach because the young man was married. It would be more romantic to locate that feeling in her heart, but truth compels the statement that it was her stomach.

A man who had been holding a low-voiced conversation with the taxi driver turned just then and at a sign from the woman stepped between Helen and the taxi door. Not satisfied with blocking her way, he tried to shoulder her aside.

Now, Helen had stood her share of shoves in the hurlyburly of the subway, but a deliberate push that nearly sent her off her feet, here on the broad sidewalk of Fifth Avenue, was a different matter. She had a temper, under splendid control most of the time, but this was too much. Instinctively she slapped the face of the man who had shoved her, and quite as instinctively he drew a gun.

This did not frighten Helen; she was no stranger to guns. No, her home town was not wild and woolly. Cowboys did not shoot it up every Saturday night. There wasn't a cowboy within many miles of that town, but it was division headquarters for the railroad, and mail clerks and express messengers go armed regularly. Helen knew them all. The sight of the gun did not frighten her; it only made her angrier than ever. She slapped the scowling face harder than before.

NEW YORKERS are a curious lot. They will stand for hours watching the excavation for a new building, form a mob instantly around a dog fight, and swarm over the scene of a traffic accident. The sight of a handsome, angry girl slapping the face of a well-dressed man on Fifth Avenue ranked, in interest, even above a dog fight. Arrested instantly in headlong progress up or down town, a crowd formed.

The man, twice slapped, lost all control of his temper. He would have used his gun without a thought of consequences had not a burly truckman standing near knocked it from his hand. A roar went up from the crowd that changed to a cheer for the truckman's deed. The men in the front line trenches of the crowd moved toward him with one accord. The angry truckman waved them back.

"I need no help—keep back! I could handle him if he was twins."

The result of his blow made good his boast. No need to count ten. The victim of that blow was out before he struck the sidewalk.

"Fight! Fight!" gleefully shouted the small messenger boys closest to the center of the crowd. "Bully for you!" "Attaboy!" yelled the young men in the crowd.

The truckman stood looking down at the man he had knocked out with pardonable pride, hoping for him to stagger to his feet so the fight might be resumed. But he lay there inert.

But the woman in the taxi had a temper too. Leaving the very correct young man, she darted toward the truckman, whose back was turned to her. The very correct young man shouted a warning:

"Look out—she's armed! Look out, I say!"

The truckman wheeled to face an angry woman, who was indeed armed. In her right hand she held a gun, small, but vicious and businesslike-looking.

The truckman had proved his courage and his strength. He would have tackled an armed man twice his size quite fearlessly, but he hesitated, and in that moment's hesitation his life hung in the balance. Then the very correct young man forgot to be correct. In one well-timed leap he reached the woman, pinioning her arms, and fell to the sidewalk clasping her. The startled truckman, who had looked at death for a moment, and knew it, wrested the gun from her and contemptuously threw it up on the seat of his truck, just as a belligerent policeman forced his way through the center of the crowd.

The crowd had become a mob so closely packed that scarcely twenty of them knew what had happened. The policeman blew his whistle loudly and continuously; other policemen joined him. The crowd blocked traffic on the sidewalk, and curious motorists blocked it in the street. Cars honked, and from all sides passers-by swarmed to the scene like bees around a disturbed hive.

The police were expert and swift. The man and the woman were hustled into a commandeered cab, the very one the very correct young man had been about to enter. The protesting truckman went, too, as a witness. Whistles blew, policemen yelled the orders that quickly brought order out of chaos, and soon the tide of traffic flowed serenely up and down Fifth Avenue as the crowd dispersed, reluctant and puzzled, not certain just what they had witnessed.

One policeman detained the young man and Helen to get their story. The young man explained that he was Edward Gordon, an architect, associated with his uncle in one of the big construction companies of the city. He was an official of his uncle's company. He had drawn a big pay roll needed for a skyscraper his firm was building. On the steps of the bank as he came out he had met the woman now in custody. He knew her; she had been telephone operator for a time in his office. He had stopped when she spoke to him, naturally, unsuspiciously. The man had joined her. In a low voice they warned him that they had him covered, that they were prepared to shoot. They had escorted him to a waiting taxi, and he was being forced to enter it when this young lady—he indicated Helen—spoke to him. He had feared that she would become involved in a dangerous business, and he had pretended not to recognize her.

Helen drew a deep breath when she heard that.

The policeman waited to hear no more. He hurried them to the police station, where Gordon told his story again. Then the police knew that they had made an important capture. The woman had specialized on obtaining substitute work in important offices, and learned when and where the pay rolls were drawn. This was the last

of several such holdups; in one of them a man had been killed.

Much later, Helen and Gordon left the police station together. After she had telephoned to her office and he to his, they had lunch together. During lunch Helen drew those crisp ten-dollar bills from her purse and paid her debt. She told enough of her story to make him realize how much he had done for her.

"But I'm in your debt," he protested. "You saved my life to-day. I wouldn't have surrendered that money without a fight, and that man wouldn't have hesitated to shoot."

They both looked sober at this. There was no denying that Gordon had been close to death that day. Helen recovered first.

"I'm glad if I helped you. One good turn deserves another, you know." Then she added irrelevantly: "And I thought that woman was your wife."

"What ever gave you that idea? Why, I'm not married. Do I look married?"

"You looked henpecked when I spoke to you."

"So might any one with a gun pressing into his ribs! I was bound not to involve you. That girl had a gun in her coat and kept prodding me with it."

Yes, he was usually a very correct young man, and Helen believed in behaving one's self in public. But they had both been through a big scene that day; danger—death itself—had come very near. And there is no denying that they were tremendously glad to be together again. So they sat very close in their alcove in the quiet restaurant, and presently his arm found its way about her. Irresistibly she turned her face against his shoulder and his mouth came down seeking hers. Time stood still.

AT last they strolled back to the Fifth Avenue branch of the Seventeenth National. They lingered on the steps. Yes, Helen the punctual, who had already taken more than two hours for lunch, stood talking to a man when she should have hurried in to her desk. Gordon surely had something to do, an important official of an important firm, yet he dawdled shamelessly. They hated to part. His card was in her purse, her address safely tucked away in his billfold. No danger of their not meeting again this time.

"When may I see you? To-night?" he asked.

"No, I have an engagement to-night." She did not explain that it was an engagement to go to the movies with another girl. "I simply must not throw myself at his head," she told herself.

"To-morrow night, then? Will you have dinner with me and go to the theater?"

Helen hesitated. To-morrow night was basket ball night. Her team at the Y depended on her. It wasn't sportsmanship to leave the team in the lurch, but she was tempted now. Gordon looked so eager. It was delightful to have him hanging on her words this way. She looked deep in his brown eyes, where she could read that to-morrow night would be the first of many meetings. It frightened her a little that she was as eager as he appeared to be. She hesitated, considered, then made up her mind with a rush.

"I'd love it, simply love it."

"That's fine! I'll call for you at seven."

A smile, a warm clasp of her hand, and Helen started up the steps. The young man lingered, watching her. She plunged headlong through the revolving door and resisted the impulse to look back for a farewell glance. Her heart beat rapidly. She could not resist that backward glance after all; she turned—yes, he still stood there, hat off, watching her with ardent eyes. She threw him a radiant smile as she thought: "What a lucky thing it was that I decided to come to New York."

She had to press her hand against her heart to still its beating. She was afraid some one might notice. Then she hurried to her desk.

"I'm so sorry to be late. It was unavoidable, as I told you over the phone."

Now, Helen was a truthful person, scrupulously so, but that statement was a downright lie. Her flushed cheeks, her rapidly pounding heart, her radiant eyes, all proved it. She was not sorry she was late—not in the least sorry.

Rare Gifts

BECAUSE he cannot bring rare gifts—
Oh, he is dark and tall,
Poor as a king who's pawned his crown—
He will not come at all.

How shall one tell a proud heart
What anybody knows?
A girl would hold a trifle dear
If it were what *he* chose.

Would cherish gift and giver
If for love of her
He brought wild apples from a hedge,
A new cone from a fir.

—*Ethel Romig Fuller*

The bewildered look left his eyes and he caught her to him

The Waters of Happiness

A correspondence bride! Oh, suppose he should not want her after all!

By Ruth Collins

Author of "The Substitute Bride"

CHUG! Chug! Chug!

So throbbed the little mail launch as it coursed its way across the sunset-tinted waters of Sunda Bay from one island to another, dropping at each the much longed-for sacks of home mail.

"That's Haiki over there!" announced the old skipper finally, pointing with his pipe to a tiny strip of green in the distance.

He turned, gave a sidelong glance at the pretty flushed face of the girl seated up in the bow, then ventured further, "Plannin' to stop long with the padre an' his missus?"

The rich color in her cheeks deepened, and he noticed that before reply-

ing she touched a tongue to too dry lips and pushed back her mass of wind-blown curls as though they worried her.

"I'm not going to the padre's!" she said briefly, in a tone which did not invite further questioning.

But the old man was too concerned to notice.

"You're sure it's Haiki you want then, miss, aren't you?" he demanded, adding, "it's not one of the resorts, you know. It's all jungle and plantation, and there's only one other bungalow on the island besides the padre's an' that belongs to the Haiki Spice Company."

"That's where I'm going—the Haiki Spice Company!"

There was a note of defiance in her voice now.

"Ah!" The skipper's eyes opened wide for a moment, then, suddenly comprehending, he gave a chuckle, leaned back and patted her little hand in a fatherly way.

"Ah, it's that way, is it, miss? Fool that I am! Come out to get married, eh?" he said.

She nodded assent, but did not look at him. She was staring tensely ahead at the strip of green which had gradually merged into a veritable paradise of green fronded palms and lacy tree ferns where brilliant-hued flowers and birds swung together, sending long rippling shadows of beauty out over the still water.

Her blue eyes were seeing none of the beauty, however—rather, there was in them a look of something very like fear.

The skipper chuckled again, then gave all his attention to running the launch in through the treacherous landing.

"You're gettin' a good man, my girl!" he remarked finally, while he kept his gaze straight ahead. "One o' the whitest chaps in these parts, I tell you. He's close though. Fancy him gettin' his girl out," he chuckled again to himself, "an' never tellin' a soul! Often wondered why he kept so to himself, an' never went across to the resort. Ah! Here we are!"

With a deft turn of the wheel he steered the launch in around a dangerous bend, shot her alongside a little landing stage piled high with great baskets.

"Looks like he's not here to meet you," he said in sudden concern when his loud "hallo!" failed to bring even a coolie into view. "Guess I'm a bit ahead o' time to-night."

"I'll be all right," the girl said quickly.

"Well, I'd wait here on the landing, miss," he returned anxiously, staring on up the narrow trail which led from the water over a hill, to lose itself finally in dense jungle. "I'd take you along myself, but I got to make the other islands before dark."

"I'll be all right," she said again, forcing a smile.

"Well, it ain't far anyhow. The bungalow's just up at the top o' the hill there." He assisted her out, pushed her bag on to the landing, then extended a grimy hand with, "An' the best o' luck to you, miss. By the way, what is the name, anyhow?"

"Turner. Aleen Turner."

She spoke over quickly, as though anxious to end the conversation, which plainly was getting on her nerves.

"Turner, eh? Well, won't be Turner long, will it, so it don't make any difference, eh? Wish I'd had a bit more time an' I'd come along to the celebratin'. But, best o' luck to you both! Oh"—his tone changed abruptly—

" tell him there ain't any mail for him. Guess he won't mind that this week though, eh?"

He started the engine and the little launch went chugging back out toward the bay.

But the girl was no longer watching. She was standing tense, staring up the white ribbon of path, and the fear she had been trying to hide, all this torturous day-long journey through the islands, now came surging up into her throat, smothering her, into her eyes, giving them the expression of a frightened child's.

Why had he not met her? And what if he did not want a wife after all?

FOR a moment the newcomer was in the grip of a real panic. The sun had sunk behind the hills, leaving the great jungle all about her dark and gray, with a chill mist rising from the water. The silence and loneliness of the place was terrifying.

But resolutely Aleen Turner picked up her suitcase, made her way up the hill, and, at the summit, came abruptly upon a little white bungalow half buried in a mass of fragrant bougainvillæa and jasmine, silvered now by the magic of the big moon just peeping over the trees.

Hesitating a moment, she dropped her bag, drew a long breath and moved slowly down the path, through a mass of flowers, to where a long figure in white lay stretched out in a deck chair, apparently sleeping. Her heart was throbbing madly as she stood staring down, studying the nice thin boyish face, tanned to bronze by the tropical wind and sun.

The sleeper moved slightly.

Just as she had remembered him, only nicer, she told herself, and finally ventured to bend, touch him lightly on the shoulder and say faintly, "Jan! Jan!"

He stirred then, but did not open his eyes.

" Here I am, Jan," she said, a little louder.

The sleeping man turned with a start, sat up, brushed his hand across his eyes as though to clear his vision, and rose slowly to his feet.

Then he stared.

"My dream girl! Little dream girl!" he murmured dazedly.

She tried to smile. " No, I'm quite real," she told him, with forced lightness of tone, but with eyes still frightened and questioning. " Didn't you expect me yet?" she jerked out breathlessly as he still stood staring like one mesmerized. " Don't you want me?" she finished desperately.

He seemed to waken then. Giving a strange little laugh he stepped nearer, took her hands in his, drew her close.

" Want you?" he echoed. " Haven't I wanted you every day, every hour, every minute since you waved good-by to me from that boat? Haven't I sat out here alone in this garden night after night picturing you, talking to you, little dream girl "—his voice was vibrant now with passion—" but somehow I never thought, even in my wildest dreams, that you would actually come!"

Her face, so pale a moment before, was now brilliant with color, but her eyes were downcast and the hands in his were cold and trembling.

" But didn't you get the letter, Jan?" she asked.

" Letter—Jan—" He echoed the words stupidly.

" No, you didn't," she answered for him, miserably.

There was a moment's tense silence. The bewildered look in his eyes began

to merge into something she could not quite fathom.

"What does it matter?" he broke out at length, hoarsely. "Letter or no letter, you came, didn't you?"

"To you, my dear!" she finished faintly.

And then his arms closed about her, drew her close, and he was raining kisses on her soft red lips, her closed eyes, her smooth white throat.

"There!" he said at length. "Now you belong to me, forever and ever, you understand?"

She looked up at him smiling, though her eyes were suddenly misty.

"This is more than I deserve," she whispered tremulously, "coming out to you like this! All the way up on the boat I have been sick, cold with fear, wondering if I was doing wrong. I didn't know, you see, whether you really knew *I* was the girl you had been writing to all year. When you began writing I thought perhaps you were just lonely out here and were writing to just any girl to amuse yourself—you weren't though, Jan?"

He hesitated a moment, then quietly answered, "No, my dear, I assure you I would never have written you a line if I had not known to whom I was really writing."

"But you didn't even know my name?" she said breathlessly.

"No, I didn't," he agreed. "I used to sit there on the deck, right beside you, watching you tend that crabby old woman, and I was dying to talk—"

"And so was I, but didn't get up courage till you had got off the boat—and then I ventured to wave!" She laughed unsteadily.

"And then you ventured to write?" he finished for her.

She turned her face from him.

"You thought I was awfully bold, I guess, picking up an acquaintance like that," she choked out.

BUT his arms tightened almost roughly about her.

"Look at me, little girl," he demanded. "I want you to tell me the truth about something. I want you to swear something! All those letters you wrote this year, all those sweet things you said in them, they were meant for me—just for *me*, weren't they? Or would you have written them if Eric Jansen had happened to be just any other man?"

She lay quiet in his arms, eyes closed for the moment. Then abruptly, "No, Jan. I swear that any letter I have ever written—anything I have ever said—was meant just for you, knowing you to be the man I loved and wanted! Anyhow"—her voice grew suddenly hard—"why worry about the letters? Letters don't mean a thing. They are too misleading. I am here now, Jan—I have come to you—"

He laughed then again, exultantly, touched a spray of jasmine which had become entangled in her fair curls from the vine behind.

"Your bridal wreath, little dream girl!" he whispered, breaking it off and fastening it as a wreath. Then, in a more serious tone, "You mean you are really going to marry me? You are sure you won't be lonely here on this little island just with me?"

"It's paradise, Jan," she whispered.

"But supposing," he asked in a troubled tone, "that after we are married you should find I wasn't just exactly what you thought I was—"

"And supposing you found the same about me?" she parried back smilingly, but deep in her eyes there was a troubled look.

"I'm willing to take the risk," he as-

sured her. "But I'm afraid we are up against it, little girl. I forgot that the padre and his wife left yesterday for a long tour through the islands!"

"That means we can't be married?" she asked faintly.

"What do they do?" she asked with forced interest.

"They simply go to a little stream and the man stands on one side, the girl on the other, and they repeat some sort of vow while the crowd chants.

"Would you be afraid to do it this way?" Though her heart pounded she shook her head and the next moment he had lifted her across the little stream

He did not answer for a moment. He seemed to be listening to the throb of the tom-toms echoing up from the jungled valley beneath them.

"It would be simple enough if we were natives, wouldn't it?" he said ruefully. "That's a native wedding being celebrated down there now."

Then the man lifts the bride, carries her to his side and she is his property ever after. Water of Happiness they call the ceremony."

The girl with the fair curls did not answer. She was looking down at the tiny rivulet which was winding its way among the garden flowers to the river.

His gaze followed hers. She felt his arms tightening about her.

"Little dream girl, come to life!" he whispered at length. "Fate brought you to me to-night and fate has made it impossible you should belong to me according to the white man's laws; but why not do it this way—across the waters of happiness—afterward we can do it in the orthodox way. Would you be afraid?"

And though her heart was pounding wildly again, she whispered no, and the next moment he had lifted her in his arms and stepped across the little stream.

"Little dream girl!" he said then, in a low voice, as he pulled off his signet ring and slipped it on her finger. "Over these waters of happiness I promise to love you and care for you all my life, and here I take you to be my wife."

For answer she lifted her lips, smiled mistily up into his eyes.

When the moon was high overhead and the jungle silent, the figure of a man in white stretched out in a deck chair, lay with face turned protectingly toward the one bedroom in the bungalow.

"OVER the waters of happiness!" The little bride was murmuring the words softly to herself the next morning as, from the veranda, she waved good-by to the tall white-clad figure just disappearing over the crest of the hill. He had planned to stay with her all this first day, but had decided at the last moment that he had something important to see to, so had gone with the promise that he would be back within an hour or so.

Now that he was no longer with her a little chill of apprehension swept over her, clouding the happiness of the day, and bringing to life the fears she had determined to keep buried.

If only he had not been so good and fine, she told herself. If only she had made a clean breast of everything last night.

"But he loves me and that will cover everything I'm sure!" she comforted herself over and over again, as she wandered restlessly about the garden and explored the little bungalow which was to be her home.

"Massa come!" the native boy sang out suddenly from the veranda behind, and at once she was on her feet, cheeks gloriously flushed and eyes shining. She did not venture out to meet him though, for a strange shyness was enveloping her, although he had been gone but a few hours.

"Jan!" she said softly as the shadow fell across the doorway. But she stopped short, blushing in embarrassment, as the shadow resolved itself into the figure of a tall, tanned, very good-looking man of about forty.

"Oh, I thought—" she began lamely, but before she could finish he was beside her, possessing himself of her hands and laughing down into her eyes.

"It's my little sweetheart, eh?" he said gayly.

"What—how—how dare you?" she demanded dazedly.

"How dare I?" he laughed as though very much amused. "But don't you know who I am, little girl? I'm your Jan! Eric Jansen! Whoever did you think I was? And I nearly went off my head when the old mail skipper came into Haulu last night and said he had dumped you off here alone! You must have thought me a brute not to meet you! My poor, poor little girl!"

She was standing still staring at him, like a little frozen statue, her eyes

wide with fear and horror. Inwardly, however, she was in a tumult of emotion. His face was recognizable now—the face of the man who had come out on that same boat with her the previous year, the man the passengers had dubbed "lady killer" because of his violent flirtations on board.

Surely *he* was not Eric Jansen? And, if so, who was—

FOR a moment everything was a blur before her, then gradually the terrible truth began to come to her. This *was* Jan—the man to whom all the letters had been written! No wonder the other had asked such strange questions, had seemed so dazed at her appearance!

"Aleen, little sweetheart!" The big strange arms were going around her now, drawing her close.

"You mustn't, please!"

"Mustn't what, little tease?" He laughed down at her, and now his lips were hovering just over hers.

"Don't you dare touch me!" she jerked out, wrenching herself free and facing him with blazing eyes.

"Why, what's wrong?" he demanded angrily. "After all that hot stuff you put in your letters, what's the idea? Haven't you come out to marry me?"

"Marry you?" The disgust in her tone was answer.

Under the tan he flushed deeply. "Oh, I see," he said wryly. "I'm just a few hours too late! Jim Terry's been talking to you, putting you against me, eh?"

She did not answer. Jim Terry! Jim Terry! The name was pounding itself against her brain.

"It's like Jim Terry," Jansen was going on, and his face flushed uglily. "He knew the letter was from you—I'd told him about you—he knew I was away and he didn't bother to forward your last letter. Saw a chance for himself, I suppose!"

Then, while she stood shrinking and miserable, he went on sneeringly, "But he wouldn't have looked at you if he hadn't seen in the paper that you'd come into a bit of money. He's been sneering all year about you and your letters—"

He stopped short as she drew herself up haughtily, faced him squarely.

"I don't think I quite understand, Mr. Jansen—is that the name?" she said coldly. "I certainly did not come out to marry you, nor have I ever written to you in all my life!"

For a moment he stood staring incredulously, then burst into a laugh.

"Going to take that line, eh?" he sneered, "when I have a hundred letters from you right here in my bag, Miss Aleen Turner!"

"Not from me, Mr. Jansen." Her tone was still even, but down in the folds of her dress her hands were clenched fiercely. "You are making a terrible mistake. In the first place, my name is not Turner—it's Fenton. Pat Fenton. And I came out here to marry Jim Terry—we've known each other a long, long time!"

He stood staring at her dubiously for a moment then broke out coaxingly, "Come on, little girl! Don't let's fool any longer! I know just as well as you do who you are—you're my own little sweetheart, aren't you? You're just cross because I didn't meet you last night, but I swear I didn't get your letter saying you were coming. Why, I got a special launch the minute the old skipper told me you'd come. Girlie, if you only knew how I'd dreamed of this day—"

He stepped closer, once more at-

tempted to take her in his arms, but this time her cry was of relief, not fear, and her gaze was on some one standing in the doorway.

The next moment Jansen was sprawling dazedly on the floor, staring up into the blazing eyes and white face of Jim Terry!

"I'll give you just twenty minutes to get off this island, Jansen," Jim's tone was ominously quiet. "And don't come back! If you do you'll go where you should have gone a month ago when the company fired you." He turned, put his arm protectingly about the trembling Pat, and went on, "I don't understand just what your idea was in coming here to molest my wife?"

"Wife!" Jansen pulled himself to his feet, wiped his mouth, and let his gaze travel searchingly from Jim's face to Pat's.

"Wife, eh?" he spat. "Oh, I see! Made a quick job of it, didn't you, soon as you found she'd got a bit o' money? Well," he gave a nasty little laugh, "I'll give you a little wedding present. A suitcase full of letters from your little bride, back there in my room! They'll make a nice evening's reading some time when you want some fun!"

With that he was gone.

FOR a moment the two in the bungalow stood motionless. Then Jim Terry's arm dropped limply. The girl gave a little choked cry and turned her face from him.

"I'll go now," she whispered. "Now you know what I am you must hate the sight of me—"

"And so must you me," he finished dully.

"You? Oh, no, Jim! You couldn't help what you did—I mean you couldn't very well refuse me when I threw myself at you. But, you see," she struggled hard to control her voice and went on, tremulously, "I thought all along your name was Jansen. One day, on the boat, I picked up a book you had left in your deck chair and I saw the name 'Eric Jansen' and ever since I have called you that in my mind."

"But I understood that last night. I knew you were writing to Jansen, thinking you were writing to me."

She was silent again for a time, then continued desperately: "Oh, I might just as well tell you the whole truth now! I never wrote any letters to you nor any other man! I'm not Aleen Turner at all—what I told that awful man was the truth. My name is Pat Fenton—"

Her words trailed off into a sob.

"Don't do that, please," he implored. "Tell me what you mean! I don't understand."

"No, you wouldn't!" She gave a miserably tearful little laugh. "Don't you see there is another girl, the real Aleen Turner, and she really was coming out to marry this man Jansen. She was the one who wrote those letters."

Then, while he stood listening dazedly, she stumbled on: "She came out on that same boat with us, a pretty little nurse girl who was with that Major Burns's children. I got to know her on the boat and afterward saw quite a bit of her in Singapore. You see, I had a very bad year of it—I had come out to be companion to that old lady I was with on board, but she died just after we landed, leaving me without a penny. I had to take just any odd jobs I could. You see, I haven't any real home—my father was skipper of a cargo boat and I had always just traveled about with him—"

She stopped, choked back another sob, then went on dully.

"Finally I got work in the same place with Aleen and one day she told me how she was writing to a man called Jansen, who had come out on the boat with us. She was a horrid common girl, you know, and she regarded the whole thing as a huge joke. She said she had tried to strike up an acquaintance on board ship, but he wouldn't look at her, so she stole a book with his name in it and afterward sent it along to him with a letter. That was how she got in with him."

She was not looking at him now, so did not see the look of relief creeping into his eyes.

"She asked me if I remembered the man," she went on, "but I told her no. You see, I was," she hesitated a moment, "oh, well, somehow disappointed. I thought you were the man and I couldn't fancy you taking up with any girl like that, for I knew the kind of letters she would write."

"And I suppose," he put in wryly, "the letters you thought were from me were equally choice?"

SHE nodded assent.

"Then one night," she continued, "she told me she was coming down to marry Jansen. You see, we had both lost our jobs and were up against it. I told her I had thought she was taking the Jansen affair merely as a joke, but she said, yes, she had up till then, but she was tired working and having no home and Jansen evidently was looking for a wife—any kind of wife—"

She gave a choked laugh.

"Those were the words, I guess, that brought me down here. They kept sticking in my mind. Somehow I had kept your face in my heart and allowed myself to dream silly things about you even though I knew you would never belong to me. I, too, was homeless and desperately lonely. Still, I don't suppose I would ever have been mad enough to come now had it not been for what happened two weeks ago.

"You see, Aleen was to start for here on a Thursday morning—she said she had written when she would arrive—but when I got up I found her already gone and a note for me saying she had heard that some old aunt in Australia had left her a little money and she had decided to go there instead of risking marrying Jansen.

"She left her ticket for me, suggesting I come on down here to these islands and try my luck for a job, and she left, too, a telegram which I was to send Jansen telling him she wasn't coming to him after all!"

"I see!" he said in a low strained tone.

She shrugged her shoulders, turned her face from him with a bitter little laugh.

"The rest you can think out for yourself. The temptation came and I fell for it. Aleen had said you would be content with any wife. I knew she was gone for good and there would be no danger of any one finding out—for a long time at least."

Her voice sank to a whisper.

"But, of course, some time, some day, I intended to confess to you. I hoped—I planned—that somehow I might make you love me—and then I would tell you—I forgot that it would be in the papers about Aleen's money—now, of course, it is too late—you will always despise me—"

The words were lost in a cry as he gathered her swiftly into his arms.

"Pat, little wife," he crooned passionately, "this is the best news I have ever had. You are not Aleen Turner

—you never wrote those terrible letters Jansen used to read to me. If you had they would have tormented me all my life. What difference does it all make—my name—your name—or anything else? I was the man you loved and came to, you were the girl I loved!"

"You mean you still want me?" she asked breathlessly, looking up at him with eyes like misty stars.

"Want you, Pat? No! I have you! Didn't you give yourself to me last night over the waters of happiness? And in an hour or so an old judge is coming across from one of the islands to make the thing legal—that is where I went this morning. But, as for me, little dream girl, our real wedding will always be that one last night—"

"Over the waters of happiness!" she finished for him.

They drew together.

The Moment of Love

NOW is the time that we should be together,
Drifting with the beauty of the tide,
Singing with star-bright or with moonlight weather,
Your hand in mine as we go side by side!

Now is the time to deny the yearning
We've known so long and felt so keenly dear,
What use is Love, or yet the white-hot burning,
Unless we know when the right time is here?

Now is the time—it is not past nor coming—
Love is all eagerness; oh, can't you see
That joy is in my heart, low-voiced and humming,
Now is the time—to-day—for you and me!

—*Peter A. Lea*

Instantly her hand was imprisoned. Oh, what a cheat she felt!

Wait for Love

Dell read a message that changed her whole life—in the eyes of a blind man!

By Barbara Connitt

WHAT did it matter that the two snugly packed bags in the back of the car had meant serious inroads into Dell Armour's tiny emergency fund? Orchards that lined the highway were just dropping their pink and white petals, and the air was sweet.

What did it matter that, in order to attend the three-day house party Jerry Daveny was giving, down at his brother's lodge near Brookside, she'd had to resign the most interesting and desirable position she'd ever had, the position of secretary to one of the financial wizards of the city, John Macey, no less?

What did it matter that Jerry was reputed to be on the eve of an engagement with Sonya Karasek, young and pretty, and an heiress, besides, of half a million? What did anything mat-

ter, except that he was here beside her, driving with her down a road that was like a black ribbon through a lane of verdant beauty?

A lark soared up near by, a song in his throat, and Dell's throat ached in sympathy. She loved beauty, craved it intensely. And she was determined to have it. Even if her methods were—as Sue, her roommate, insisted—a little reckless and adventuresome.

You had to try for what you wanted!

Furtively Dell glanced at Jerry, tweed clad and bareheaded; at his fingers, slender and tanned, against the wheel; and her own hand fell idly to the six inches of empty seat between them. It was promptly imprisoned in one of his, and a calculating little thought tipped her lips into a smile. Spring was a good time to hunt your man. All nature conspired with you.

Dell moved over into the six inches of empty seat. "So we can talk more comfortably," she said, and Jerry smiled.

They did not hurry. The bell of the little rustic church in Brookside was just calling vespers as they passed through. The creek was at the full, and rushed picturesquely over its rocky bed beside the road which gradually rose, winding at last into a little wooded valley.

Presently Jerry indicated a group of sprawling, cabin-like buildings just ahead. "There," he said, "is Daveny Dens."

They crossed the creek by a sylvan bridge, and Dell gazed about with interested eyes. The main building lay like a fat, squat W on the black loamy soil, with a number of small outbuildings in back. At the upper end of the little valley, glinting and gleaming in the dying rays of the sun, a slender waterfall, the overflow of a tiny mountain lake, tumbled over a rocky ledge to pour its waters into the creek.

JERRY stopped the car at the steps of the lodge. "Think you can stand this for a few days?"

Dell took a deep breath of the zestful air. "It's like heaven!"

He grinned as he helped her from the car. "Hope nothing arouses any ideas to the contrary."

How beautiful everything was, thought Dell. If all went well—if Jerry proposed, and oh, he must!—then some such delightful place as this might be hers to enjoy always.

"Do you think your brother will like me?" she asked, and the question was unconsciously wistful.

Jerry dropped her bags on the steps and rubbed his chin reflectively while he considered her. "Well, now, I don't know," he drawled, teasingly. "I tried to pick you out to suit him! Hello!" he added eagerly, his glance going beyond her. "There's Sunny!"

Around the corner of the lodge came a girl, smart riding breeches revealing a slender girlish figure.

A pang of dismay shot through Dell. She had known, of course, that there would be others at Jerry's house party, but somehow she hadn't expected him to invite Sonya Karasek. And then she glimpsed in Sunny's dark eyes a hastily masked dismay that matched her own, and her fear died.

She was even a little sorry for the girl when Jerry greeted her only with a friendly handclasp before he introduced Dell. Sunny reddened becomingly. She was sweet and unspoiled still, Dell decided, in spite of all the money that was hers. Shy-eyed and friendly, she gave Dell her hand, and while Jerry put away the car, led the newcomer off to meet Mrs. Kennedy,

the elderly widowed aunt of the Daveny's who was their hostess.

The old lady welcomed Dell with both hands. "My dear, I'm glad you've come! Jerry was to have quite a party, but they've all disappointed him but you and Sunny! Can you imagine? In my day we took our invitations seriously."

Sunny enveloped the old lady in an affectionate hug. "Never mind," she consoled, "since there's so few of us we can all be chummy and natural."

Left alone in her room to unpack and remove the dust of travel, Dell smiled to herself. Everything was shaping itself nicely to her plans. And Sue had been so disapproving!

"I suppose you think," Sue had said, with a touch of asperity, "that you can step right out, when you get back, and find another job as good as the one you've thrown away."

"No, a better one—much better!" Dell had smiled her confidence at Sue. "Jerry likes me. He's asked me down especially to meet his brother."

"Which likely means nothing at all, you goose!" Sue had few illusions about the attentions girls of her class received from wealthy men.

"It means," Dell had said, with a quiver of the lips that was instantly stilled, "that I won't have to go back home next year and marry Oliver Jerome. That's what I promised to do, on my twenty-first birthday—if in the meantime I can't find any one else willing to marry me and pay my debt to him."

"Don't be absurd!" Sue had laughed. "A Shylock couldn't hold you to that silly schoolgirl promise!"

"Mr. Jerome can, and will!" Hopelessly Dell's hands relaxed in her lap. "It was on that understanding that he paid for mother's funeral expenses and loaned me enough money to get a start in business. I've never yet broken a promise. I couldn't break that one, Sue. The only way I can get out of it honorably is by marrying some one else—some one who can pay him back the money he advanced me. That explains my interest in Jerry."

"Not Jerry! Dell, you're not serious? Why, Sonya Karasek is practically engaged to him!"

"If Jerry wanted to marry Sunny, as he calls her," Dell had argued, smiling, "why didn't he do it long ago? He's known her for ages. They're just good friends."

"But you're poor," Sue had persisted, "and Sonya has half a million in her own right. In nine cases out of ten, Dell, in spite of what story books say, wealth marries wealth."

"One in ten is not such a long chance."

"But he can't make you happy," Sue had cried. "You can afford to wait a little longer. Wait for love! Can't you see Jerry'd never in the world make you happy? Why, he's a playboy, and responsibility rolls off his shoulders like water off a roof!"

Dell had stopped her, with a slender hand over her lips.

"What, after all, is love?" she had taunted, "and why shouldn't Jerry get others to do things for him? He has the money."

Sue had crumpled, then, her arguments exhausted. Her thin arms had encompassed Dell in a hug of affectionate concern. "Oh, Dell, you're not cold like that! You're not hard! Why do you pretend?"

Dell had drawn a long, shaking breath, and her fingers had clung a brief instant to Sue's. But with her mind fully made up to her course of action, and with no misgivings what-

ever, she had climbed into Jerry Daveny's smart roadster that afternoon and settled herself beside him.

REMEMBERING all this, Dell smiled again. Already she felt she was going to adore Mrs. Kennedy. And as for Sunny—Dell's smile faded—Sunny was like a kitten, a soft little kitten that could be hurt so easily. What if Jerry hadn't been sure which girl he wanted to marry? What if he had invited Sunny and herself to the house party for the deliberate purpose of making his final choice before Monday?

But her host's smile, when she found him waiting for her on the wide veranda, contrived to put that idea to rest. He was, he said, a messenger sent to escort her to dinner, and tucking her arm under his, he led her around the house to a table spread under the trees.

Soft lights from the low-hanging branches shone down on the scene, and the beauty of it drew a little cry from Dell.

At the sound, a young man at the head of the table rose slowly, his gaze fixed on Dell's face. Like Jerry he was, but thinner, with a higher, more scholarly forehead, and hair less inclined to wave. His mouth and chin, too, were firmer, less given, apparently, to smiling.

So this was Lance, Jerry's brother. A little anxiously, Dell's gaze questioned his. Admiration shone in his eyes, she was sure, and something else that she couldn't, at the moment, define; but her heart was suddenly freed of a great weight. If Jerry's proposal depended upon the approval of this young man, then the day was already won.

Jerry bent his head. "Should have given warning," he whispered, "he's blinded!"

Blinded by her beauty? With a tiny protesting laugh Dell repaid him for the tribute to her loveliness. That was the way of Jerry, never giving a compliment directly.

A quick pressure of his arm silenced her.

"This is Lance, my brother," he said, "I've been promising him your acquaintance for weeks. Lance, this is Miss Dell Armour, and I assure you she is just as delightful as her name."

"I hope I shall have opportunity to discover that for myself," acknowledged the man, a smile bringing a fleeting beauty to his lips.

Dell's gaze widened at the sound of that voice. It was like a 'cello note—Jerry's voice refined and deepened—and it enchanted her.

"Jerry claims," she smiled, "that I've blinded you." Mischief lit her eyes. She took a small spray of blossoms from the vase on the table and tapped him playfully on the shoulder. "With this wand," she cried gayly, "I give you back your sight!"

His hand came up and gropingly caught the flower-decked branch. His other hand sought hers. A little frightened, conscious all at once of the sudden tense silence of the others, she drew back. Involuntarily he followed, and a heavy cane that had rested against his chair fell at Dell's feet.

Tears sprang into her eyes. Pity and shame confused her. That fixity of gaze that she had fatuously taken for admiration—that strange indefinable something in his eyes—what had it been but the blank stare of the blind?

What a fool she had been! What a vain silly fool!

"I—I'm sorry!" she faltered. "I—didn't know!"

"Please don't feel sorry!" Again the fleeting beauty of his smile. "Perhaps you spoke more truly than you know. Let's hope so, at any rate, and sit down sensibly to dinner."

Silhouetted against the moon stood a man and a girl, fast held in each other's arms. Sunny and Jerry!

He fumbled for a chair, pulled it out, and gratefully Dell sank into it. At Mrs. Kennedy's nod, a Chinese boy slipped silently from place to place, serving a delicious soup, and some one began hastily to talk to cover the awkward pause.

Dimly Dell heard through a haze of misery, and forced herself to smile, to answer, to eat. Oh, could she ever atone?

Jerry came tardily to her rescue. "Miss Armour—or Dell, if she'll let us—should interest you deeply, Lance. She's secretary to John Macey."

"'Was' not 'is,'" thought Dell miserably.

"The financier?" asked Lance.

"The same," assured Jerry. "And I never before knew a girl so young and so pretty who knew so much about investing and finance as Dell does."

LANCE had been on the point of drinking from his glass, and now set it back gently on the table, untasted. The action was significant, Dell felt, if only she could interpret it. Did he, perhaps, object to girls who had to work, who were not wealthy enough for leisure?

"Investing!" repeated Lance, with a wry little turn of his lips. He turned toward Dell. Odd that he should do so, she thought, being blind. There

followed for her a brisk little examination, the questions becoming so technical, at last, that Sunny laughingly protested. It wasn't proper, she objected, to bring up such weighty subjects at a dinner table.

"Let him alone!" grinned Jerry.

"Why?" asked Sunny. But Mrs. Kennedy's glance fastened on him with suspicion. "Jerry," she demanded sternly, "when will you realize that a little work is good for you?"

"You don't know, Aunt Kate, what a bore money is!"

"You dislike the responsibility of handling and investing our income?" Lance asked him, quietly.

Responsibility! The word touched a chord of memory for Dell. Sue had argued that Jerry was a playboy; that he shirked responsibilities. And Dell had defended him. But she hadn't known then that those responsibilities fell on a blind brother's shoulders.

Jerry had the grace to be slightly ashamed. "Oh, I can stand it, Lance, if I have to," he said. "The point is, almost any one could do it better."

"But," protested Dell, "it isn't hard! And I could help you," she offered. "I'd be glad to give you the benefit of what little experience I've had."

"Help me!" He looked at her quaintly, an amused expression in his eyes. "But I wanted you to take over the whole job!"

His plaintive tone provoked them all to laughter, but Dell was somehow disappointed. She laid a hand eagerly on Lance's arm. "He's like a schoolboy trying to avoid a dull lesson," she said, "but don't let him shirk it. Some day he may need the experience."

"Is that kind?" asked Jerry, stuffing an olive in her mouth. "Biting the hand that feeds you!"

Lance laughed shortly, and changed the subject. Dell spoke of the very pretty effect of their outdoor dining room, and the talk came around, presently, to a discussion of Lance's pride, a garden of night-blooming flowers. Jerry and Sunny, against Lance, argued the relative merits of day gardens and night gardens.

"Lance lost his sight," Mrs. Kennedy whispered to Dell under cover of the argument, "in an explosion that occurred when he was trying to mix a spray for his plants. In one way it's been a good thing for Jerry. He was leaving everything to his brother, and now he has to attend to a few things himself."

"Will Lance ever see again?" whispered Dell.

"I don't know," the old lady answered. "He's refused to let us call in a specialist. He claims to have implicit faith in the physician who has been treating him."

"Where is this lovely night garden?" asked Dell, turning to Lance.

"Right at the foot of the terrace, outside your bedroom windows."

"I should like to see it."

"The moon will be out to-night. Try it just before you go to bed," advised Mrs. Kennedy. "It's well worth seeing."

"I believe I will," promised Dell.

DINNER was over. The sharp night air beginning to make itself uncomfortably felt, there was a general exodus to the house. In the raftered living room, before the wide log fire, Dell found herself again seated beside Mrs. Kennedy. Sunny was at the piano, jazz tumbling out from under her flying fingers. Jerry and Lance on either side of her on the long piano bench.

Wistfully Dell watched, wishing that she instead of Sunny were seated there.

"You love Jerry, my dear?"

Dell looked up, startled, into Mrs. Kennedy's concerned face.

"I—I—don't know!"

But the stammered words were not quite true. It wasn't love she felt for him—not exactly. He could give her beauty, security, ease, and above all, freedom from her promise to Oliver Jerome. In the face of that, what did love matter? And what, after all—as she had asked Sue—was love?

"Sunny," whispered Mrs. Kennedy, "has loved him all her life."

Dell bit her lip. "But she has money."

"That couldn't console her, my dear, if that is what you mean." Mrs. Kennedy shook her head, a faint, tender smile on her lips as she watched the three on the piano bench. "Sunny's parents died when she was quite young, and she grew up in the care of loveless and unsympathetic guardians. She's not had a happy life. Jerry and Lance used to play with her as children; and I believe, even now, they are the only real friends she has."

"And what of me?" Dell wanted to cry. "All I have in the world is a few hundred dollars. I even gave up my job for the privilege of coming down here! Sunny's money at least insures for her a certain fineness of living, comfort and security. Not having Jerry won't take that from her! But if I lose him I'll be condemned to a life any girl might shrink from — a life with Oliver Jerome, whose first two wives died, they say, from overwork and no desire to live!"

But Dell said none of these things. She folded her hands tight together and fought back tears.

"Won't you join us, Dell?" asked Lance from the piano. "Aunt Kate won't mind being deserted."

Mrs. Kennedy smiled agreement, and Dell, after a slight hesitation, accepted the invitation.

"I have an idea you can sing," smiled Lance.

"Just a little," she admitted, taking the seat beside Sunny that Jerry abandoned for her.

"Another shy little girl," commented Lance. "Get up, Sunny, and let me play. What do you like? Not Jazz, surely. Operatic arias, ballads—or how about a lullaby?"

His fingers dropped into the soft harmonies of Brahms.

"Oh," smiled Dell, "I know that one from nursery days."

"Sing it!"

Softly she obeyed.

> "Lullaby, and good night,
> With roses bedight, ..."

His face was turned toward hers as she ended, and back of his gaze burned an emotion that made her momentarily forget that he was blind—as if, by sheer unwillingness to acknowledge his handicap, he had triumphed over it.

But Jerry demanded something more sprightly, and with good grace, Lance relinquished his place again to Sunny. There followed a number of lively popular pieces in which even Mrs. Kennedy occasionally joined.

"How old-fashioned we are!" cried Sunny finally. "Who cares about singing nowadays? Let's dance!"

So they had a number of dances, and Jerry had two with Dell and only one with Sunny. But Dell wasn't enjoying herself as she had hoped. Mrs. Kennedy's words had disturbed what

Dell had believed to be the unswerving purpose of her visit. Sunny was, by her very artlessness, so defenceless!

Sam, the Chinese boy, came in at last on soft-shod feet, to serve cool drinks in tall, frosted glasses, with delicious little round cakes. And Dell was glad when the evening drew to a close and she was free to go to her room and think things out.

"Dell, my darling! You beautiful thing!"

BUT she was, after all, too tired to think for long. It had been an exhausting day. She undressed, slipped into bed, and fell into troubled sleep.

In her dreams Sunny clung to her—as Sue had done that morning in reality—and begged and pleaded, her eyes round with her daring and her desire, that Dell go away and leave Jerry to her, who loved him more than life itself, more than anything else in the world!

And Dell, with a groan, awoke, and remembered that she had forgotten her promised visit to Lance's garden at the foot of the terrace.

She crept out of bed and pulled aside the curtain at the window, thinking, perhaps, she could catch a glimpse at least of the opened blooms. The terrace immediately outside her window was black with shadow, but at its end, silhouetted against the moonlit garden, stood a man and a girl, fast held in each other's arms.

As Dell looked, the girl broke away, ran into the garden, and looked back. It was Sunny.

The man stood still where she had left him on the terrace. A pang shot through Dell's heart, and left behind a dull ache. What was there left for her now since Sunny had won?

Out in the garden Sunny poised for a moment, like a hesitant butterfly, then apparently repenting her flight, turned and came back to the man with a little rush and a flinging of soft arms around his neck.

They stood so for a few moments, close-locked, softly talking. Then they separated and came down the terrace past Dell's window, hand in hand.

Dell's heart gave a great throb. Why, it wasn't Jerry, after all! The man was Lance!

Dell crept back to bed. Gray dawn was slanting across the skies before she finally slept. She awoke to find Sam, the Chinese houseboy, knocking at her door, with a note from Jerry. He and Sunny were going up the cliff for an early morning swim in the lake. Would she care to come?

Dell would, and in a few minutes she had joined them on the porch, in bathing suit and wrap. Lance was there, too, in flannels, smiling at Sunny's chatter.

"Don't stay in too long," he advised. "It's mountain water, and like ice."

"Aren't you coming?"

He shook his head. "Perhaps I shall again some day," he said with a smile; "but I'm afraid it's beyond me now."

Jerry and Sunny were loitering ahead, obviously in a hurry to be off. Dell laid her hand on Lance's sleeve in a gesture of repentance. "I—forgot!" she whispered, "what a blunderer I am!"

The climb up the cliff beside the waterfall was not an easy one, and Dell was glad to let the other two go on ahead while she stopped now and then to look down at the ever-changing veil of water roaring down into its rocky basin.

She reached the top in time to see her two companions, hand in hand, running down the little beach into the deepening water. Laughing, gasping, Dell followed. She felt the chill water sweep over her shoulders, and then they were all three swimming off, side by side, the roused blood running swiftly in their veins.

After a few minutes Sunny turned back. Jerry, treading water, watched her go. "She's going to try a dive off the Turtle's head, that long, thin rock jutting out there at the side of the falls."

"Oh, but won't she go over?" gasped Dell.

Jerry laughed. "Not Sunny!" He turned his back on the falls, and swam off, with long, lazy strokes.

But Dell was worried. A flow of water like that going over the falls must exert some pull. The water was cold, and remembering Lance's admonition, Dell climbed up on the narrow beach and ran toward the cliff where she had left her wrap. A rocky barrier shut off for a moment her view of Sunny, and when she rounded it Sunny had climbed up on the rock, but instead of diving, was climbing on up toward the falls.

PUZZLED, Dell followed, keeping out of sight. She saw Sunny surmount the jagged rock at the lip of the falls. Carefully the girl made her way until she reached its outermost edge. She looked back over the lake, and for no apparent reason, screamed once, dreadfully. Then she ducked down, gripped the rock by one of its flinty promontories and let her body slide slowly over the edge until she hung by that slender hold directly over that dreadful drop into the rocky basin of the falls.

Dell heard some one scream in answer, and did not know that it was herself.

She saw Jerry turn in the water, and the swift flash of his tanned arms as they churned through the water toward the falls.

Could he see her? Could he see Sunny hanging there over that ugly drop—Sunny, who loved him more

than life itself? Dell, remembering her dream, flung her hand an instant across her eyes, and then she, too, was in the water, disregarding the undoubted pull of the falls, fighting through it with the strong sure strokes of desperation.

She reached the Turtle's head and clambered up. But in a moment Jerry was there, and then he was ahead of her, leaping recklessly from rock to rock, straight for that slender figure. He flung himself flat on the rock and gripped her arms. Dell knelt beside him. "Careful!" he gasped.

Dell grasped Sunny's wrists above Jerry's clutching fingers, and slowly, heartbreakingly, they pulled her in to safety. And Sunny, her arms bruised and cut, her bathing suit torn, looked down over the falls, and fainted.

Jerry carried her down to the beach, laved her cuts and chafed her hands into warmth, while Dell went up the beach and brought back her wrap.

"Get mine, too!" ordered Jerry, unceremoniously.

Dell hesitated. For a brief instant she was tempted to tell Jerry what she had witnessed, but in the end went back for his beach robe with her story untold.

It might be true that all was fair in love, but somehow she couldn't betray Sunny, not when she was lying there, white and spent and helpless.

As she returned Sunny opened her eyes, stammered a little, like a weary child. And suddenly, as Dell watched, Jerry's head bent down and his lips crushed against Sunny's, Sunny's arms went up around his neck, and they clung together.

Now was the time for Dell to speak. Not only could she tell of Sunny's deliberate try for sympathy, but she could face the other girl with what she had witnessed the night before in the garden.

But again Dell hesitated, and suddenly she understood.

To risk life or hideous injury like that, just to awaken Jerry's interest, Sunny's feeling for him must have been tremendous, indeed! Here was love—true love, and Dell was awed and shaken. To speak now would be to shatter irretrievably the beauty of the moment that was theirs. She couldn't speak now—or ever.

She stole away, caught up her wrap, and scrambled down the cliff. She would go back to the lodge, tell them what had happened, and send help.

Poor Lance! Her heart went out to him in a sudden rush of sympathy. He had kissed Sunny the night before, kissed her as fervently as Jerry was doing now. He loved her, and now Jerry would take her away, and Lance would smile and wish them luck and fling up his head, bravely.

Dell wasn't thinking of herself now, or of what the collapse of her own plans might mean to her. She was thinking of Lance, who had lost his sight, and now was to lose the girl he loved. And there wasn't anything she could do. Even to offer sympathy might be like flicking a raw wound.

On the veranda she met Mrs. Kennedy, who promptly took over all arrangements for the reception of the invalid.

DELL went on to her own room, dressed hastily, and went in search of Lance. After a considerable hunt, she found him in the kitchen by the window. Sam, who was at the sink washing up his cooking utensils, glanced up, saw her, and dived suddenly at his master, flinging over Lance's hands, and whatever else

there might have been on his lap, the newspaper that lay beneath them. Lance drew his hands out and protectingly spread his fingers over the crumpled roll of newspaper.

"Good morning," he said easily, "whoever you are. I hope you don't mind Sam's actions. You see, he and I have a little secret we're not quite ready to disclose."

"Of course I don't mind," said Dell. "Shall I go?"

Lance's face lit with a smile. "Miss Armour!" he cried in a pleased tone. "No, don't go! Did you enjoy your swim? Will you breakfast with me? Talk to me, will you? If you've nothing better to do? Where is Sunny—and Jerry?"

She answered the last question first, gravely and briefly, without giving Sunny away. "She's all right, and they'll bring her along slowly. Mrs. Kennedy's had the boys saddle horses and go to meet them at the foot of the cliff."

"And you?" asked Lance. "Are you all right?"

His eyes, had they been able to see, would have been looking straight at Dell's lacerated hands and arms. But he couldn't see, thought Dell, and it might save him a little concern if he didn't know. "Yes," she told him, "I wasn't a great deal of help."

He moved toward her, but she evaded his approach, and when she spoke again it was to invite him into the sunny dining room where the blank-faced Sam was serving their breakfast.

While she ate, with scant appetite, Dell studied her host and thought of many things. "Sunny is a lovely girl," she said, once.

"She's like a gay, dancing feather from a raven's wing," agreed Lance with a smile.

Dell was surprised to find herself fighting tears. "Do you know—Mrs. Kennedy knew — that Sunny and Jerry—"

"Are very much in love," finished Lance. "Were you trying, perhaps, to break that to me gently?"

"Well—yes."

"I knew," he told her. "I'd seen it coming long ago. And I knew quite definitely last night."

Dell was silent, puzzled. But it didn't, after all, matter very much.

"I—I'm going away to-day," she told him, the decision made only that moment in her thoughts. There wasn't any reason for her to stay. She'd very likely only be in the way. "Will you arrange, please, to have some one drive down to Brookside with me? I can get the train from there."

"But I thought you were staying until Monday morning, at least, and I had hopes that we could make you extend your visit."

Dell shook her head. Her eyes were gentle as she looked at him. "You wouldn't want me to stay—if you knew why I came!"

"I supposed it was at Jerry's solicitation, in the hope that he could inveigle me into asking you to do the work he has been handling for the estate."

"If that was Jerry's idea, he never suggested it to me. I came down solely for the purpose of winning Jerry. I—didn't succeed."

"And so you plan to run away."

"Yes. Do you think it's cowardly of me?"

He smiled gently. "No, just feminine. You don't love Jerry as a girl should love the man she marries."

She was silent a moment, nonplussed. "I can't guess how you knew."

"Why did you want to marry him?"

She told him about Oliver Jerome, and as Sue had done, he thought her childishly absurd in her desire to keep the letter of her promise.

He laughed a little, deep in his throat. "When, and how, did you learn what true love is?"

DELL looked up. His eyes seemed to be blazing into hers. A deep blush burned under her skin, before she realized that, of course, he could not see. What could she answer? That it was when she saw Jerry and Sunny, there on the beach, lost to all else but the marvel of their love? Was it then?

Suddenly she knew it wasn't.

She shook her head; laughed a little, tiredly. "I really don't know," she said. "I think I'd better go now and pack."

He pushed back his chair. "Now you're being cowardly," he said softly.

"What—do—you—mean?" Dell's heart leaped and began furiously to thunder against her ribs.

Before she could do more than rise he was around the table. He caught her swaying figure in his arms, stayed her breath with his tight embrace, kissed her as if that were all of life that was left.

"Lance! Please!" A sob caught in her throat.

"Dell! My darling!" he whispered, his lips in her hair. "You beautiful, beautiful thing!"

He brought her hands to his lips, looked down at her fingers, lost in his large tanned palms. "Your hands, your poor torn hands!" he whispered, and his lips touched the red inflamed scars.

"Lance!" she whispered, unbelievingly. "Lance! You can *see!*"

He laughed shamefacedly. "Jerry was such a shirker that I—well, when I had my accident I conceived the idea of going conveniently blind so that he'd knuckle down and learn a few necessary things about business. My scheme was working fairly well—until he brought you down, and then I all but gave myself away a dozen times."

"To-day in the kitchen—"

He chuckled. "Yes, that newspaper. I was reading."

She stirred in his arms and would have pulled away, but he held her fast. "Sunny—you," she faltered. "I saw you last night—in the garden."

He looked his reproach. "You promised to slip out and admire my garden. Sunny came, instead, and got the kiss I meant for you."

"But—there were two kisses!"

He smiled. "As far as Sunny knew, I was blind. She remembered that, and out of the kindness of her heart, bless her, came back to beg my pardon for—not liking the kiss."

He laughed down at Dell, who seemingly hadn't been offended at the pressure of his lips. "And so I told her how I'd been mistaken, and she confessed that she'd been expecting Jerry. We wished each other luck, and kissed to seal the bargain."

Dell was silent, her finger playing thoughtfully with the button of his coat.

"Are you worrying about the ogre, Oliver Jerome? His spell is broken, little girl. We'll have to write him a little check, later, to soothe his feelings, shall we?"

She thanked him with a soft little flush. "No," she shook her head, "it wasn't that I was thinking of. I was wondering — how you knew — I love you."

"Intuition," he whispered, teasing-

ly. "The intuition of a blind man who was able to see too clearly. It was unfair, my dear. You thought yourself secure, and let me see—your eyes, your tears—your trembling hands. Will you forgive me?"

She twisted the button around the other way. Then she raised her arms and brought his lips down to hers. "The kiss of absolution," she whispered. "Oh, Lance, I want to go back to Sue—my roommate!"

"Back to Sue? And leave me? So soon? Why?"

"I want to tell her that I believe in love!"

Love Song

FLOWERS—jewels—
Theater tickets.
Lovely presents!
But you have given me
The loveliest gifts
Mortal could receive.

Gay joyous companionship,
Sweet sympathetic understanding,
Subtle delicate courtship—
Tender passionate love.

I'd rather have your nod,
Your smile,
Your merest caress—
Than all the jewels of India.

My Lovely One—
My Beloved!

—*Dorothea*

The actress stared at her pale, frightened face. "What's wrong?" she cried

Cherry

Cherry turns her back on fame, and begins her true career at last

By Marguerite Lovell

THIS plan of cutting herself off from the one being she loved was like a sword through her heart. Sobs shook her in great gasps. Burney heard them in the next room and opened the door between.

"You've had twenty minutes. That's enough," he said. "Don't make such a row! Cut out that stage stuff. Been writing a letter? Well, I've got to censor it!"

"Burney, I have simply said farewell to the man I love."

"Well, what of it? If there's nothing in it, you can let me see."

She put out her hand imploringly, but he opened the envelope and took out the sheet of paper.

"You've made a mess of it, anyway," he commented. "Why, I can't read it for blots!" He laughed, running his eyes over the little missive, which would have touched any one less hardened.

"Passed," he remarked, restoring it to the blotter. "He won't be able to make head or tail of it, anyhow. As for being in love with the fellow, you'll find plenty more. Why, you might even fall in love with me before you've done!"

Cherry's tears had dried upon her cheeks. She picked up her suitcase.

"It is you who waste time talking, now," she said icily. "I am ready."

Burney caught hold of her arm.

Cherry did not dare to look back at the little place where she had been so happy.

She followed him out of the room, struggling to hold back her tears.

XXII

THE luxurious Pullman surprised Cherry, numbed though she was by all that had gone before. She could not enjoy any of it; she was too miserable. But she did wonder how Burney, who was usually bankrupt, had raised the means to travel like a millionaire.

Although her spirits were drooping, she looked forward to getting back to work rather than idling her time away with nothing but her sad thoughts for company. She made no friends on board, because Burney never let her out of his sight all day.

Her lifelessness disturbed him. For her personal welfare he had no concern; but his ambition was to make a fortune out of her. If she went on like this her charms would fall away. One day he came into her stateroom to expostulate with her for refusing course after course of the elaborate and excellent dinner she had no appetite for.

"You're turning yourself into a living skeleton," he accused her. "I've never seen any one fall away so quickly. Feeling train sick?"

"My heart is sad," Cherry replied wearily. "Do not trouble about my appetite. Down South, please to remember that when I was hungry you denied me food."

"Down South you weren't all skin and grief, like you are now," he argued. "You showed signs of getting fat. Now you've got salt cellars in your neck. In your new rôle it won't do for you to look too skinny."

"You said I'd have to seek an engagement," Cherry took him up. "What is this rôle of which you now speak?"

He avoided meeting her eyes directly.

"Oh, well, I've prepared the way in a manner of speaking," he answered. "Got an agent busy. You—we shan't have to wait long. You'll be absolutely 'blah' if you haven't got IT in Hollywood. Before we started I could have flirted with you myself; but now I'd just as soon sit in the room with a wet umbrella. IT's everything, and you can't get across the screen without it. You'll flop!"

Cherry rested her chin on her hand and lifted her listless eyes to his face.

"Upon my soul, you were a sight more full of pep when I was treating you differently!" he went on. "Kindness seems to be wasted on you."

"You are not kind," she denied. "I do not trust you, Burney. Always I am conjecturing what wickedness you are working in your mind."

Burney's eyes shifted again; he could hardly ever look into Cherry's squarely.

"So that's all the thanks I get for bringing you on this trip in style!" he murmured ironically. "Oh, well, I'm not asking for thanks. Of course, I know you're love sick and pining for your precious doctor friend."

Cherry closed her eyes with sudden pain.

"Do not speak of him," she said. "He is the greatest man in the world, and the best."

"Oh, so that's how you feel about him, is it? He's a sort of saint to you, I suppose," Burney sneered. "Perhaps you'd be surprised if I told you he has a wife living?"

"I know that also," she replied.

"He has a wife who is faithless, and very soon the law will make him free."

"I see. And then he'd have married you. Is that the idea?" Burney closed one eye suggestively. "Why, all he wanted was a little fun, like all the rest of us. Come on, Cherry, let's be friends. I might have guessed you've been starving for love and kisses!"

She pushed him away violently. "Not from you!" she cried.

Her repugnance could not jar the man's overwhelming conceit. He shrugged his shoulders.

"You're a freak, that's what," he opined.

XXIII

JUST outside Los Angeles, within a short drive of the sea, an ornate replica of a mediæval German castle, with turrets and battlements and slitlike windows, was one of the show places to be seen round about. It was the country residence of the great film director Von Stamp, and Burney decided he would build himself something of the same sort, only bigger, when he was making a fortune.

His front door would be rolled gold instead of copper, his portcullis painted gold to match. He would have gold wherever gold could be put. Von Stamp's abode was spectacular, but drab.

Within, the German had given his fancy a free rein. Each room through which he took Burney was a different poem in rich color and design.

"You approve my house, *hein?*" he asked. "You think Cherry will like it?"

Burney grunted.

"I don't think Cherry will like anything. She's not in the mood," he replied. "She doesn't even know yet why we're here."

"You mean, she is unaware I shall make her my star, that I have been waiting for her now for weeks?"

"Absolutely. I didn't tell her, because I wanted to keep her quiet. She doesn't dream she's half a star already, chosen for your new picture. The band will begin to play when she does!"

"I will conduct." Von Stamp folded his arms complacently. "In the end she will dance to my tune. They all do. But you have kept me waiting too long," he complained. "You've had a very large sum in advance. You should have wasted no time; yet you've been five days in Hollywood and I have not seen my new star yet. That's not good business."

"Maybe not, but it was finesse," Burney replied. "Cherry's got to be handled with gloves. I've been afraid to tell her, that's the truth. She thinks we've come to Hollywood to look for work. When she knows your contract still holds good she's bound to see red. You'd better be the one to explain things to her, and not me."

Von Stamp agreed.

"Of course I'll explain to her; why not? We'll be excellent friends in a short while," he said.

"Well, I'll send her round this evening, if you insist," Burney replied. "Mind, I can't answer for her behavior. She'll probably scratch and bite."

Von Stamp smiled a slow, deep smile.

"Little cats attach themselves to me. Have no fear," he said. "I look forward to meeting her again with much pleasure." The German offered Burney a fat cigar.

Burney lit up. "Cherry will get a surprise," he grinned. "She won't know where she's coming until she sees you. If I told her, wild horses wouldn't

drag her along, nor even your Lincoln." He paused on the step, looking down the straight drive across the road, where a Florentine villa in a spacious, sun-drenched garden caught his fancy and pleased his eye.

"That's a nice little show," he pointed out. "Who lives there?"

"Lydia Marvel. She's just got back. There's a clever woman for you!" Von Stamp replied.

Burney pricked up his ears. "Highly paid, I presume you mean?"

"Well, she comes about third or fourth after Garbo on the salary list; but I wasn't thinking of that. She's married millionaires mostly, and they've all tiled her in before parting company. She's the richest woman in Hollywood."

"I suppose she's married again by now?" Burney inquired nonchalantly.

"Not yet. They say she fell head over ears in love with some fellow in the East—a small-part actor, I believe. It may be true. She's always in and out of that business. Care to meet her?"

"There's no need. I've played with her," Burney answered. "We were very pally toward the end—in fact, quite thick. Then I had to leave her to go searching for Cherry," he added. "I'll just stroll over and pay a call. So long, Fritz. See you to-morrow—if you're not a corpse!"

VON STAMP continued to stand upon the step, surveying the sunlit prospect through half closed, heavy-lidded eyes.

Then he went indoors and sounded a gong, summoning his Chinese body-servant. The instructions he gave Ah Sing were few and explicit. A super supper with iced champagne was to be left in readiness, after which Ah Sing could take a holiday downtown and return early to-morrow morning.

An hour or so later, Von Stamp was alone in the castle. Ah Sing had performed all his tasks and gone. The Chinese was a magician. He had prepared that super feast according to directions and decorated all the rooms with flowers as well.

Von Stamp went through the rooms to see that all was in order, sniffing the fragrance of the blossoms as he went. It was only five o'clock now. He had still three hours left in which to wait impatiently for Cherry. He passed on into his workroom and picked up a scenario script scored with his marginal notes. He would read Cherry her part, tell her the story, keeping her tranquil and unsuspicious until they had supped and wined.

He grew absorbed in his script. His picture work was a genuine passion with him. He poured out all his strength into that and making world stars out of little girls.

The blue curtain over the alcove was swaying slightly. Looking up from the typed page he saw it, and noticed that there was no breeze. The brocade folds were shaking. Some one was behind them. Some crazy extra perhaps, who bore him a grudge and wanted work, had secreted himself there. Directors carried their lives in their hands sometimes, amid all the riffraff and scum who poured in from all quarters of the globe.

Von Stamp's eyes were glued to the curtain.

"Who's there?" he called.

XXIV

"I'VE made an appointment for you with a big director. You're to see him to-night," Burney told Cherry when he got back to the palatial

hotel where they'd been staying since their arrival from New York. "He's arranged to see you at his house. You're to have a fine part in his new piece, and you can thank me for all the arrangements. I was talking to him this afternoon, and we've even decided on your screen name. We think Camille de Brie sounds good. Do you like it?"

"I have no objection," she replied indifferently. "But I do not understand how I am engaged before a camera test has been made. What knowledge has this director of my work?"

"He knows of you through me," Burney boasted. "There's a car coming for you at half past seven. It's nearly that now. I meant to have got back before, but I stopped to pay a call on Miss Marvel. She was delighted to see me, too. Received me with open arms. Fell on my neck, in fact. It's a pity you weren't there, to see how loving some people can be. It might have done you good. What have you been doing all the afternoon? Mooching around with a long face, the same as usual, I suppose."

As a matter of fact, Cherry was looking a little happier.

"I have made a pleasant acquaintance," she replied. "After lunch, while I was walking in the gardens, I met a lady and we talked. She asked me many questions, and we spoke in French. She is called Madame Flynn, and she is of such kindness that I told her all my troubles since the death of my sainted mother, when my days of persecution began."

"Then you told her too much," Burney snapped at her. "I'll call on her myself and say you're a liar. Madame Flynn won't pay any attention to you after I've explained what a tartar you are. Besides, it's no use you're palling up there. She directs for Superfine, and if she wanted you she couldn't have you, because you're on contract elsewhere now. You'll hear all about it to-night at the castle."

Cherry paused in the doorway.

"What is the name of the director I have to see?" she asked. "And where is the castle?"

"The castle is his house. It's a building he got a fancy for and put up, and his name's—his name is—let me see? Hang it, I've gone and forgotten it, and it's on the tip of my tongue, too!" Burney exclaimed. "Make it fast. Better put on that evening dress I bought you. You must be smart."

Cherry departed to change her frock and came downstairs a few moments after the car had arrived.

Burney was waiting impatiently.

"You'll be late," he fumed, "and that's bad manners. You aren't in a position to keep a big director waiting for his supper."

He bundled her into the car and banged the door.

For once her suspicions were not aroused, nor had she the faintest idea of what was in store for her.

She leaned back in the comfortable, roomy car and closed her eyes, while her thoughts harked back to her "dear lord," whom she loved and longed for more every day.

Her life was now more like a wearisome dream than reality. The real part of herself, her heart and soul, were left behind, across the continent. It was only her body that was in Hollywood.

Von Stamp's great car tore along in the darkness like a hungry monster devouring the road. It slackened speed as it turned in through the gates of the drive, on each side of which two enormous stone dragons with illuminated mouths and eyes mounted guard, and

finally came to a standstill before the house itself.

The copper door stood open, and a dim red light gleamed in the square hall.

Sprawled across his desk, with a bullet through his heart, was the man who had been her enemy

The chauffeur got down and opened the door.

"Please step inside, missie," he said. "The boss will be with you immediately." And, climbing into his seat again, he drove off.

A little nervous now, exactly why she could not have told, except that the house seemed so silent, Cherry stepped over the threshold into the big hall with its groined roof and heavy oaken furniture.

She sat in a great carved chair and waited. It was so still that she had the feeling the whole place was deserted. Strange that her host did not appear!

A little undecidedly, she got up and wandered into a room beyond, where supper was set out upon a table laid for two. Flowers were arranged as though by a woman's hands; wine was there too, and ruby wine glasses. In

the center of the table festooned by garlands a gold dessert dish gleamed, piled high with luscious, deep red cherries.

And still no one came.

Like little Goldilocks in the deserted house of the three bears, Cherry passed on into yet another room, looking for her host.

Leading from the dining room was a half open door into a library. She went in. A shaded lamp gleamed upon the figure of a man sitting in the big swivel chair, leaning forward with his head on the table, apparently asleep. There was something unpleasantly familiar about that thick neck and close-cropped cranium. It was like—like the back view of Herr Von Stamp—

But of course it was only a resemblance.

Diffidently, supposing he had fallen asleep, she touched him on the sleeve; but he did not move.

Then, all over the white blotting paper, she saw a great deep stain that looked like red ink and was not red ink, and on the floor just by her feet lay a tiny revolver over which she nearly tripped.

So that was what the silence had meant; this was—death!

With her pulses beating like great hammers in her head, afraid to touch, yet still more compassionately afraid to run away, she tried to move the heavy form, and, succeeding, looked down in petrified amazement upon the face of Herr Von Stamp.

Although he had been her enemy she could not leave him so. One succored a wounded foe, however wicked.

She laid her head against his chest, listened for heartbeats while she held her breath. It was still, dreadfully still.

He had been a bad man, but he was dead. She could not hate him any more.

She stood up, straightening herself, too confused to know what she should do. Her one thought was to escape from that dreadful house at once. She had miles to cover in the darkness unless she could find the car and the chauffeur who had driven her here. She ran round, looking for the garage, only to find it shut and locked and no sign of the driver anywhere.

Down the drive she sped and into the broad road, where the lights of a dwelling gleamed upon the other side.

She darted across, and, reaching a white-painted doorway, rang and rang at the bell.

It was opened by Miss Marvel herself, dressed in a gaudy kimono, with her genuinely golden hair flowing over her satin shoulders.

"Land sakes, it's Ted Burney's French baby!" she cried. "What's wrong, child? Come right in!"

XXV

HALF fainting, Cherry stumbled over the threshold.

Disjointedly she gasped out what she had found and seen.

Miss Marvel listened, her eyes distended with horror.

"You mean to say Von Stamp's been shot!" she cried. "Who did it? Did you see him killed?"

Cherry tried to drag her toward the door.

"Come with me. Please to come back with me," she entreated. "I'm afraid. I can't go back alone."

"Of course you can't. Neither will I!" Miss Marvel was a very practical young woman; she soon grew calm. "I wouldn't be mixed up with a shooting for the world!" she averred, "I

wouldn't go near the place. Why, I might even be accused of the murder! What were you there for, I'd like to know?"

She was considering quickly.

"You're in a pickle. Gee! I'm sorry for you! I'm wondering what's the best thing to get you out of it, to prove an alibi. I could swear you were here, but you say his chauffeur brought you. His chauffeur would be called, so that won't wash. First thing is to get you home. Brace up, baby-face. We'll see it through."

This was a new Miss Marvel, a woman worthwhile, practical.

She ordered her car, and on the drive back she plied Cherry with questions, and the girl's faint answers told her a lot she wanted to know. Her bright blue eyes narrowed and grew hard in the half darkness when Cherry told of how Burney had sent her out to Von Stamp's house without telling her where she was going.

"That was a dirty trick. He wants horsewhipping for that," she said. "Maybe I'll teach him a lesson." She squeezed Cherry's cold hand. "If you get out of this perhaps I'll help you get away from him. I'd be doing you a service, eh? Now, here we are. Show me the way, and don't be afraid of that big stiff. I'll manage him!"

The elevator wafted them upstairs to a small suite on the third floor.

Burney nearly fell backward when he saw them. He looked from one to the other blankly.

Miss Marvel walked right up to him, holding Cherry's hand firmly.

"You got to do some quick thinking, Burney," she said. "Your little girl's in trouble. Von Stamp's been shot by some one, and she found him lying dead. She came right over to me, and I've brought her back."

Burney pointed a finger at Cherry. His face had gone livid.

"You *found* him? Don't lie!" he accused her. "If you did it, tell us. We've got to know the truth. I can't get the hang of this; but it's a bad job. I wonder if I'm dreaming."

"It's a bad job, but she isn't lying and you're not dreaming," Miss Marvel stated. "This is Hollywood, where anything may happen. That man has got just what was coming to him. He was murdered while he was waiting for your kid. Who did it, no one knows. There were enough who hated him to kill him ten times over. All that concerns me and you and this poor child here is that it may look black for her."

Burney collapsed into a chair. He sat with his head in his hands, thinking hard.

"What's to be done?" said Miss Marvel.

He got up again and began to pace the room.

"All I can say is, if she's innocent she'd better make a clean breast of it and go down to the police right away or phone them," he decided. "If she isn't, she'd better tell me and we'll frame up a story that it happened in self-defense. She might get off on that, perhaps."

Cherry shook her head.

"He was dead when I saw him," she repeated. "I cannot say any more than the truth. Do you wish me to say I killed him?"

Burney rumpled his hair until it stood on end.

"I wish I'd never seen you," he snarled. "You've been a scourge to me since I first set eyes on you. This will finish everything. I brought you out here to make you famous—contract signed and Von Stamp standing

all our expenses. Then, the minute you see the fellow you go off your head and fire a pistol. I'll never believe anything different. Why, I've seen murder in your eyes myself!"

Miss Marvel put her arms round Cherry.

"Poof! Why, she wouldn't kill a rattlesnake!" she scoffed. "You've got this framed up entirely wrong. You're no judge of character, let me tell you, Burney. I'd stake my fortune that this child doesn't know a thing more than she's told us. You take her to the police and let her tell her own story. I'll ring up and say we're coming down."

She picked up the telephone receiver.

Burney and Cherry sat tense while she handled the situation. Her cool manner was astonishing. She made one or two brief statements and then listened while the officer at the other end of the wire replied. They saw her expression change swiftly into one of intense relief. She nodded at Cherry, smiling.

"Thank you, officer. We'll come right now," she said. "You may as well take my little friend's evidence, and then she can get to bed. She's all shaken up, as you can imagine."

She replaced the receiver.

"Well?" said Burney, in a fever of anxiety.

"You can calm down," she answered. "There won't be any noise over this affair. The police say it's a clear case. Gerda Kay walked into the police station an hour ago and gave herself up. She's quite crazy. Only a few of us knew she'd been put into a home. I was one, but I never heard they'd let her out again. They did, though, and this was the result. She's been threatening to avenge herself ever since she was sent away. They only want Cherry at the station to take down her evidence, because she was the first witness on the scene, that's all. Well, I guess we've all had a nasty turn, and we need a good night's rest to get over it. I'll take Cherry down myself and bring her back. You needn't come, Burney. You'd only be in the way. I'll say good night to you now." Her fine eyes flicked at him with such scorn that he winced.

XXVI

HOLLYWOOD forgets its sensations very quickly. There is always something new happening. The murder of Von Stamp by a demented girl he had once starred aroused more newspaper notice than actual talk.

The event, however, had an immediate and disastrous effect upon Burney's finances, which were entirely cut off through Von Stamp's death; even the contract signed for Cherry was so much waste paper.

They moved to a cheap apartment, and Burney hung about the studios most of the day, trying to get a foot in. His treatment of Cherry was surly and morose. He would not let her look for work; neither would he consent to her accepting an offer when it came her way.

Madame Flynn, the woman director with whom she had made friends at the hotel, had suggested a contract, but Burney refused to let her sign it.

"I'm keeping you to star myself," he grumbled. "I'm not parting with you to any one."

"I would be pleased to act under Madame Flynn," Cherry said.

"I dare say you would, but I shouldn't," Burney returned. "That woman don't like me, to begin with,

and I won't have any woman's fingers in the pie."

"Let us return to New York," Cherry urged. Her voice almost broke with longing as she spoke. Home—Marlton. They all were spelled the same. Here she was in exile. Never could she become reconciled to this cruel separation which made her feel more unhappy every day. The sunshine and brilliance of this new land mocked at her, because her spirit was wrapped in gloom.

"Back to New York?" Burney took her up. "Not on your life! There are only two sorts who come out here from there who do that—the successes and the failures. I'm not going to count myself—or you—one of the last. Besides," he added, "you wouldn't be hankering to go back if you knew what I ought to have told you weeks ago, only I was afraid it would be a shock. That doctor friend of yours won't be there to meet you. You'd only have the fishman to fall back on now."

Cherry put down the needlework she was doing and rolled it up with trembling hands. She had turned pale. If Burney had news of Marlton he had been keeping back, she must hear it. She could bear anything better than suspense.

"Please to tell me all you know," she faltered. "It is cruel not to tell me the truth."

"Perhaps it is. You may as well hear now." He paused. "I saw it in a paper soon after we came out. Dr. Hugh Marlton was killed in an airplane smash. I cut it out. It's in my wallet now. There you are. You can read it yourself."

He thrust a creased and grimy newspaper clipping into her hands.

There was a mist before her eyes. She only saw a jumble of lines.

"I cannot see. Please to read it," she said faintly.

Burney read the announcement aloud, without the slightest sympathy or emotion. It was the brief statement of a plane accident, as disastrous as such calamities can be. The victims had been burned to death, among them two passengers, Dr. and Mrs. Hugh Marlton.

Burney returned the clipping to his wallet.

"You said there was going to be a divorce. Seems they must have made it up, as they were together," he said. "That's a month old now . . . So you wouldn't want to go back, would you?"

Cherry stood, swaying a little. This was the end of her life, her world, her very universe. Her dear lord was dead! She would never see him any more. Her heart felt like a stone in her breast.

She groped her way to a chair. She put out her hands like a blind person walking.

"Feeling faint?" asked Burney.

She found a chair. It was like an anchorage in a sea of night and blackness.

"I'll be all right," she answered faintly, "if you will please to leave me alone."

"I was going out anyway," Burney replied callously. "It's no use pining. I've told you that before. You'll lose your looks."

She did not look at him. She stared straight in front of her with unseeing eyes. What did it matter whether they flourished or starved? Her dear lord was dead; her life was over.

Burney strode to her and shook her impatiently.

"Don't sit there like a silly owl, looking at nothing. Can't you speak?"

He seized her shoulder in a grab that hurt, shook her, then turned impatiently away.

"Sit and mope all you want to," he growled. "I'm going to call on a woman who has some pep in her!"

He went out and slammed the door.

XXVII

"I WAS beginning to wonder if you were ever going to see me again," Burney said and his huge paw gripped Miss Marvel's cool hand. "Do you know I've called three times and been turned away? I'd half a mind to storm your door down and carry you off in my arms," he went on.

"To be your wife is my career," she told him softly. "Oh, my dear lord, at last!"

"What would you have said to that, eh, little woman?"

"It wouldn't be the first time I've been commandeered," she replied, with that upward sweep of her eyes known to film fans the world over. "Will Goldsmith, my last husband, drove me to a minister before I could get my breath. I like whirlwind men."

"Well, I'm worse than a whirlwind when I'm in love." Burney sat beside her. "I'm a raging torrent, a cyclone, a burning volcano. Why, you may have had five husbands, but I don't mind betting you don't know what love can be. You wouldn't have that look in your eyes if you did."

Again her purpled eyelashes fluttered over the blue orbs, veiling them before the look of innocence faded out. She had practiced that look for hours in front of her mirror, every day. She exercised it as regularly as the physical jerks which kept her figure so young and girlishly slim.

"What do you mean?" she asked, wondering when he was going to embrace her.

"The look of a woman who needs to be taken away to a desert island for a whole week, and loved and loved," he answered. "That's what I'd like to do with you."

She moved imperceptibly nearer.

This was a scene after his own heart. It made him feel like a great lover on the stage. And the little woman was so responsive, too. That night when she had brought Cherry home she had seemed cool, practical, and a little scornful of him; but to-day she was quite different—a comfy little thing, waiting to be cuddled and kissed.

He slid his arm around her waist.

"There's no time to lose. I've waited for you too long already. How soon will you marry me, sweetie?" he urged.

Such masterful wooing, he felt convinced, would sweep her off her feet. For himself, he wanted to secure this prize before his funds petered out altogether. Once he was Miss Marvel's husband he would direct her pictures, control her affairs, keep her in order—Cherry as well—and perhaps make a fortune in real estate in his spare time.

Miss Marvel allowed him to implant a Hollywood kiss of the lingering, close-up brand upon her coralline lips.

"How soon will I marry you?" she repeated. "My, aren't you in a hurry for a date! I need a little time to get used to things, my dear. Let's be secretly engaged for a while. There's only one thing that's going to worry me," she went on: "I'm not over-keen on having Cherry around all the time. She'd be in the way. Still, you've got to look after her. You can't help yourself."

"Of course I can help myself." Burney was off his guard now. "You needn't think I'm bound to mind Cherry," he confided. "Make your mind easy about that. She's not my ward, and never was. I'll tell her to clear out to-morrow."

Still Miss Marvel did not seem convinced. She wanted more definite assurance than a spoken word. This little soft-spoken thing with five ex-husbands and a seven years' successful screen career behind her had a man's mind and grasp of business matters.

"I'd rather have you put that down in black and white," she said. "I'd like a short statement explaining you haven't any legal claim on the kid and that she's free to go her own way."

"Anything to oblige you, my dear," Burney agreed good-humoredly. "Put it in your own words; I'll sign it."

Miss Marvel phrased a brief statement with lawyerlike precision, and Burney signed it with a flourish.

"There you are! Mind you don't lose it," he cautioned playfully.

She placed the document in her desk and locked it. Then she perched on the arm of his chair.

"Think you'll like being my husband?" she murmured.

"Why, sure!" Burney looked around the luxurious room. He was so eager to move in that he could hardly see the sense of waiting at all. Here was fortune as well as a lovely woman within his grasp.

He remained to lunch and left late in the afternoon. The hours had fairly flown, and he was aglow with the success of his wooing.

HE came striding into the drab little apartment where he had left Cherry in the early forenoon, and found it in semidarkness. The girl was crouched on the floor with her head in her arms, resting on the hard little chair.

Burney lit the light.

A triumphant grin wreathed his features.

"Hello! You still there?" he greeted her. "I've got some news for you. I'm engaged to marry Miss Marvel, and I've promised to wash my hands of you. You're free to walk out this minute. You can go back to New York or sign on with Madame Flynn or anything else you've a mind to."

His sudden change of front might have altered Cherry's world a few hours ago. Now, even the astonishing news that she was free meant nothing to her.

She turned the door handle.

"Oh, by the way," Burney called her back, "you can't go without any money. Take this to tide you over. I'm on velvet now—or I shall be next week."

He handed her two crumpled five-dollar bills.

Cherry snatched them out of his hand, tore them across and into little pieces, flung them into his face.

It was her last gesture of defiance.

Burney's harsh laugh followed her as she left the room. She was a little fool and could starve for all he cared.

XXVIII

A WEEK had passed and Burney's love affair had not progressed at all. In fact, he was distinctly uneasy about it. Miss Marvel had been "at the studio" when he called; but when he presented himself there she had either just gone or not arrived. He even began to suspect she was avoiding him on purpose, though why he could not fathom.

Finally he wrote an urgent letter, and in the end Miss Marvel received him.

She greeted him so coolly that he was utterly nonplused. No one would have guessed there had ever been a sentimental interlude between them. Could she, he wondered, have forgotten that she had promised to be his wife? He couldn't make her out at all. She sat a long distance away, parried his amorous overtures by deftly turning the conversation in other directions, and kept talking about nothing in particular as if to an ordinary visitor. At last he could endure it no longer. Lydia would have to understand he wasn't the man to be played with.

He crossed the room and pulled her to him with masterful brutality. But her lissom body felt like steel. She was as strong as a lioness, too. With a supple moment, she freed herself and laughed. He didn't like that laugh; it had a mocking sound.

"Lydia, what's wrong?" he demanded. "What's the sense in treating me like a stranger when we're engaged? I don't see there's anything to laugh at, anyhow."

She sobered down all of a sudden and became serious and disdainful again, as she had been on the night she brought Cherry back.

"Burney, I'm going to talk to you plainly. Sit down," she said.

He obeyed, staring at her, wondering.

"I've been teaching you a lesson, my friend, that's all," she began. "It's this way. When we first met, I fell for you. You looked a big thrill in that seaman's rigout, with rings in your ears and a jersey. I got the notion you were a marvelous man with a great, kind heart, caring for that little orphan girl. That day she fell over the cliff and you were so kind and tender—till you got her home. I guess I'd have married you on the spot, if you'd asked me. Even when she disappeared and you left to find her, I never tumbled to it that she'd run away from you because you led her such a life. Fitch told me some things afterward that opened my eyes. I began to see the affection you put on for Cherry in public was so much eye-wash, and that you'd almost broken her spirit by your cruelty.

"I didn't feel so soft about you then.

"You know what happened after—how Cherry ran over to my house the night Von Stamp was murdered. Well, I was all for her that night. Guess I felt like a mother. I got the whole story out of her, and what she couldn't tell me I pieced together. You knew where you were sending her and why—that poor baby whom Von Stamp wouldn't have spared. Did you want to say something? I haven't finished yet."

Burney's throat felt dry. This was an awful interview; nothing was going as he had planned.

"You've framed it up all wrong," he denied. "Good Lord, do you think I guessed he was a man like you say?"

"Aw, can it! You knew!" she accused him. "It's common talk in every city where he directed. He gave you money. You brought her out here to give to him."

"I brought her out here to star," Burney mumbled. "I was acting as her manager, that's all. I've always been good to her."

"I see. So good and kind that she was always waiting for her chance to run away," Miss Marvel murmured.

He made an impatient gesture.

"That was nothing. Some girls are like that—wild by nature. They'll run away from a good, kind home and wander in the streets. There was no holding her in. That's why I didn't mind giving her up after all. She'll make her way without me."

"Of course she will," the actress agreed with a meaning smile. "Now you see what my idea was—to help her out."

Burney's mouth dropped open.

"To help her what?" he echoed blankly.

"To assist her," Miss Marvel explained. "I haven't lost sight of her this last week, if you have. She's signed with Superfine now for a long-term contract, and Lena Flynn's going to nurse her career. Lena's a great woman and one of my best friends. Cherry won't look back now; and, what's more, she'll start the right way. She'll have a bigger name than I have before she's through. I like to see people get what they deserve."

She broke off, and looked him straight in the face.

"Even you," she added deliberately.

Burney got up. He couldn't sit still any longer. The very carpet beneath his feet began to feel like shifting sand.

"You've been making a fool of me," he muttered. "You never meant to marry me at all."

"No," she replied smoothly. "I've no use for you, and that's the truth. So now we'll part. I'm sorry I can't give you any more time, but I'm very busy to-day."

Burney's face was livid with rage. He stood over her, his hands twitching.

"You'll give me back that paper I wrote about Cherry. I'll have that before I go," he shouted.

"Sorry," she answered coolly, "but I haven't got it. I handed it to Madame Flynn to take care of for Cherry."

For a moment Burney looked as if he would like to have taken her by the swanlike throat and throttled her.

Miss Marvel saw the ugly expression in his eyes and did not quaver.

"If you lay a hand on me, Burney, you'll be thrown out instead of walking," she said quietly. "I've got two of the biggest colored men in Hollywood for my servants, and they know what to do."

Burney's face was a picture of impotence and chagrin. All his castles in Hollywood had crumbled into ruins. Yesterday and all last week he had been on the high tide of success—or so he had believed. Now the tide was out and he was stranded high and dry.

XXIX

TWO years—it seemed more like ten to Marlton—passed without any news of Cherry. He was not the same man. He felt older; he looked sadder. He worked harder than ever; but even so, he could not get accustomed to her absence.

Always he had been hoping against hope for a word or a sign from her, but none had come. She might have dropped out of existence.

He had made inquiries in every direction, but without success. In the end he gave it up.

He could not bear to think that she might be unhappy, and once more under the domination of the brute she had so feared.

And yet, had he only known it, Cherry was in New York now, staying at a hotel within a few blocks.

It was his sister who made the important discovery, and dropped in to tell him about it late one evening.

"I had to come in for a minute," she said breathlessly. "I can't stay, because Will's waiting in the car and he wants to go home. Oh, Hugh!"—she paused to stare at her brother's slippered feet—"What funny, gaudy old shoes! Where *did* you get them? You must give them to Leach to throw away at once!"

Marlton knocked out the ashes from his pipe.

"I wouldn't part with them for worlds. These slippers will go under a glass case when I've done with them," he answered. "Cherry made them for me when she was getting better—bless her heart!"

"It's Cherry I'm sure I've seen tonight!" Dorothy seized the lapels of his coat excitedly. "That's what I came to tell you. "We've just come from the Superfine, and the star in the picture is a young girl called Camille de Brie. *She's the living image of Cherry!* Will said so, too. I couldn't tear my eyes from the screen. You must go and see it for yourself tomorrow. It's called 'Romany Love,' and she plays the part of a gypsy girl."

Marlton shook his head.

"I couldn't bear to watch anybody who resembled Cherry," he said. "It would hurt too much. Besides, I don't like the talkies."

"I tell you," she insisted, "I've seen Cherry herself. And if it's Cherry, she's in New York, Hugh. I heard some one say so in the lobby. She's staying at one of the big hotels. She only arrived yesterday, and there was a huge fuss made over her—over Camille de Brie, which must be her screen name."

Marlton was still unconvinced.

"If Cherry is here, don't you think she'd have let us know?" he replied.

Dorothy disagreed.

"I'm not so sure. There might be reasons why she hasn't. I shan't rest until I've seen her face to face. Well, I must run away now, but I had to tell you. Wouldn't it be wonderful if I called at the hotel to-morrow and found her and brought her here!"

"Wonderful!" Marlton answered. "So wonderful that it's not in the least likely, my dear. Wait till you see Miss America's face when you ask her if she's a little girl called Cherry!"

"She can't be an American," Dorothy protested. "She must be French with that name, Hugh. You used to be so full of hope about finding her. Why shouldn't she have made a name in pictures? Come with me to-morrow and we'll inspect her together!"

"Do be sensible." Marlton checked her impetuosity. "Can you imagine me paying a formal call on a movie star, simply because you've seen her on the screen and think she looks like Cherry?" he sighed. "We've followed so many false trails that led us nowhere. You can't wonder that I've no hope left."

"Oh, Hugh, I wish you wouldn't talk like that! It makes me feel I could shake you!" Dorothy said. "We'll find Cherry again, you'll see."

"I thought so too, once," Marlton answered briefly, "but not now. Good night, my dear. Don't keep Will waiting."

He saw her out.

WHEN she had gone he went back to his quiet study and resumed the medical treatise he was reading. He could not concentrate upon it any longer. Cherry's face kept coming before him, blotting out the printed page, and Dorothy's insistence that he should see the film where another girl resembled Cherry would not be dismissed. In spite of the fact that he disliked "talkies" as a rule, because one so seldom saw anything worth the thousands lavished on their production, he made up his mind to see this one, if only to satisfy Dorothy.

If there was the faintest chance of finding Cherry he would follow it up, although he hardly dared to hope that she would ever come into his life again.

In the morning he went to the hospital where he had seen her first amusing the patients in the convalescent ward. He never passed through it without thinking of her with a dull twist of pain in his heart.

The matron waylaid him as he came in. She was not the same one who had been at the hospital two years ago.

"May I speak to you for a moment, Dr. Marlton?" she asked. "I had a visitor a few minutes ago, a well-known movie actress, Miss Camille de Brie. She arrived in a car stacked with flowers to give to the patients, and then she had a talk with me. She wanted to endow a bed in memory of you."

Marlton started. This was something more than just another false trail now. His heart began to beat wildly.

"Please tell me exactly what she said. I don't quite understand," he said in a voice that was not so calm as usual.

"She said you were a great friend of hers several years ago, but she believed you were dead, doctor. It's most extraordinary! Of course I explained to her you came here every day. It was most moving to see her joy when she understood. Would you like to see her? She's here still."

"Thanks. I'll look for her myself, matron, if you don't mind."

Marlton did not hide his impatience. He was through the door again in a moment, striding down the long corridor toward a small storeroom with a high window giving on to the convalescent ward. He looked through—and as he looked two and a half years rolled away—

He saw Cherry at the same old game, amusing the patients with droll burlesques of hospital celebrities—Cherry, his darling, not one whit altered except that she was a little taller and older, and beautifully dressed, as screen stars invariably are. Now she was "taking off" no less a personage than himself—the swift stride, one hand behind the back; and even his bedside manner. It was ridiculous. It was wonderful. He heard them all laughing. She was laughing, too—and kissing her hands. Then she moved lightly and brightly from cot to cot, bestowing flowers and fruit on every patient in the ward.

She emptied her basket, paused to wave a bright farewell, promising to come in again; then turned to go.

She danced into the corridor as Marlton walked out of the storeroom.

FOR a moment she stood still, her hand at her heart; the next she was in his arms.

"Oh, my dear lord!" she cried. "Is it truly yourself? So often in my dreams I have seen you, and when I awoke I have wept until the morning because the *Journal* made a printing of your demise."

"Come in here." Marlton's voice was unsteady. His heart was racing and throbbing. He could hardly believe his good fortune at last. He led Cherry into the very consulting room where their first interview had taken place. Then he drew her to him and held her as though he could never let her go.

"Cherry, my beloved little girl!" he murmured. "I never thought I'd find you again. I'm wondering if I'm dreaming, too!"

She lifted her sweet little face.

"Then—please—do not kiss me yet, my dear lord," she requested, "for if it is a dream the so great joy will wake us."

But Hugh was not afraid. He held her close and kissed her as if he could not stop.

"I know you're here, my precious," he said at last. "I'm only so dreadfully afraid I'll lose you again. Oh, Cherry, tell me what made you go away, and why *did* you never write to tell us where you were?"

She wound her arms around his neck.

"The devil fetched me," she replied. "He said if I did not come he would make great trouble for you, and you would be ruined. I could not allow that you should suffer for my sake, so I had to follow where he led. We went to Hollywood, and there he told me you had been killed in an airplane. He showed me the newspaper that said so."

"That was a mistake. It was corrected afterward. My wife was killed with her companion," Marlton explained.

"That was sad. I am grieved," she said seriously, and then, after a short

pause, she added: "Perhaps—it is quite likely — you have married again?"

"Do you think it's likely?" he asked. "You know it isn't! Go on with your story, sweetheart. You haven't told me half."

She told him all—graphically, in headlines.

"So, in the end, after I was free of the devil," she concluded, "Madame Flynn made a contract for me with the Superfine. For six months I played in minor rôles. After that they intrusted me with a star rôle, and in the end I *arrived*.

"But never was I satisfied." She pressed her heart. "Oh, my dear lord, always I was empty here! Sometimes I feel I could not live at all. Only when I was at work could I obtain relief from the desolation. I would pretend to be gay, to dance and disport myself; but I could not stop the sorrow in my heart. So, after two years, I come back to make a pilgrimage to your grave. Oh, my dear lord, little did I think we should be united in this life!"

"I, too, almost despaired, my darling," Marlton answered.

She traced the little tired lines of work and worry graven on his face with a soft finger.

"To think that you have been in so much anguish because of me!" she murmured. "It pains me to see how thin you have become. But that will soon be altered," she consoled herself, "for as soon as we are married I shall study so that in addition to the omelet and coffee wherein I excel, I shall be able to devise a roast beef and potato puff. You will like that—yes, no?"

Marlton's hand rested lovingly on her curly head.

"I'll be quite well now that I've found you, my dearest dear," he answered. "But what about your career? You can't give it all up for me!"

She made a superb gesture.

"To be your wife is my career," she told him softly. "Our lives are like a story in a book. For those who read 'The End' would now be written, but for us, oh, my dear lord, it is only the beginning!"

THE END

Sweet Peril

OVER the quarry walls
A picaresque moon dips low;
Which of you frightens me more
I do not know.

He is a rogue fascinating,
You a god-eyed man,
Eyes and moons so close have been
A peril since time began.

—*Marjorie Holmes*

Holliday Hearts

BEGINNING A SERIES. THE ROMANCES OF THE HOLLIDAY FAMILY

ROMANCE ONE:

HELPLESS THEODORA

By Ethel Donoher

SARAH HOLLIDAY'S children had been born into the family they would have selected had they been given any choice in the matter. And the Hollidays were not miracles, they were just lucky — for they not only loved, but liked, one another. Of course they had differences of opinion, vehement sometimes, but ordinarily their natures were sunny and their hearts high.

There were five of them, beginning

with Sarah Holliday herself. Her first born was Peter. He was twenty-five; his hair was red and his grin was engaging. Next came Theodora, aged twenty-three. She was tall and slim and brown and beautiful.

Also she was capable—very. She was an efficient secretary to a busy and exacting lawyer; she swam like a mermaid; and few people could beat her at tennis.

Next came Nancy, aged twenty, and then Sunny, who had been christened Sarah for her mother, and who was just sixteen.

Sarah Holliday loved them, humored them, and ruled them.

"You may say what you like," she asserted one morning as she passed a cup of coffee across the breakfast table to Nancy, "but Theodora hasn't very much sense where men are concerned."

Nancy, who looked as fresh and sweet as a newly opened Killarney rose, smiled mischievously.

"What would you advise?" she asked.

Sarah Holliday pretended to frown.

"That's right — make fun of your mother! Tell me that the methods I used with the men I knew in my youth are too antiquated to be mentioned. Well, all I've got to say is that I had more sense than Theo has."

"But what's wrong with her, dear?"

"Plenty. For one thing, she's too capable. Men like women who depend on them more—"

"Oh, mother! Don't you know the clinging vine went out of date ages ago?"

"Did she, indeed?" said Mrs. Holliday placidly. "That shows how little real wisdom you have, after all, my dear. But, as a matter of fact, I was not speaking of what you call the clinging vine type. A girl doesn't have to cling to make a man feel that he's more competent than she is."

"But men don't expect women to be that way nowadays, mother—"

"Rubbish!" said Mrs. Holliday. "They always did like that sort of woman, and they always will. Of course some girls can act practically any way they please, and yet the men will flock around them. But Theo isn't one of those lucky girls. She needs to—well, to connive a little."

"Imagine Theo conniving!" Nancy said, amused.

"Yes, I know, she won't be very good at it," Mrs. Holliday agreed. "I'll have to do it all unless you can help—and if you can't help, see to it that you don't hinder me."

Nancy was beginning to be interested now. "What are you going to do?" she inquired anxiously.

Sarah Holliday settled her ample proportions more comfortably in her chair at the head of the table, and smiled, well pleased with herself.

"I shan't tell you what I'm going to do," she decided. "In fact, I'm not quite sure. I shall—feel my way, I think."

Nancy regarded her quizzically for a moment; then: "I'll bet I know what you're planning: you're going to try to marry Theo to John Weston."

Again Mrs. Holliday smiled, a serene, comfortable smile.

"He's a very fine young man," she said evasively. "Peter thinks most highly of him."

"I know, he's all that, and, besides, he's awfully attractive—so grave and sort of dear—but, darling, don't you know that he doesn't like women?"

"Fiddlesticks!" Mrs. Holliday retorted. "Who ever heard of a man who didn't like women! All we've ever heard about are those who *say*

they don't like them. And John's no different from the rest: whatever he says like that he doesn't mean."

PETER HOLLIDAY came in just then, and the conversation became general. There was no further reference made to John Weston, who, as Peter's old friend, was paying them an indefinite visit.

"Are you going anywhere to-night, Peter?" Nancy asked presently.

"Yes," was the prompt response. "Why?"

"Oh, nothing in particular. Marjorie said she might come over; I thought if she did, and if you were home, I might call up Colin Hunt, then we could play bridge."

"Marjorie doesn't want to play bridge with me any more than I want to play with her," Peter said with decision. "So if you've selected Marjorie Shaw, now, for my future wife, you might just as well save yourself—"

"Why should I select your wife?" Nancy interrupted loftily.

"Why, indeed?" Peter wanted to know.

"But," Nancy continued, "if you had any sense—"

"Stop quarreling, children," Mrs. Holliday said mildly but decisively. Then she turned to smile at the tall man with fair hair, tanned skin, and clear gray eyes who had just entered the room.

"Good morning, John," she greeted him with heart-warming cordiality. "Did you see anything of my other two girls on your way downstairs? I don't want them to be late for school and for the office."

"Just picture Theo late for anything!" Nancy said to the newcomer.

John Weston returned their greetings and took his place at the breakfast table.

"No," he replied to Mrs. Holliday, "I didn't see either of the girls, but I imagine that Nancy is quite right: Theo, at least, will be on time."

Sarah Holliday regarded him with just the right amount of amused tolerance.

"Theo hasn't much sense where men are concerned"

"I don't believe," she told him, "that you really understand Theodora."

"Why shouldn't he?" Peter asked. "There's nothing so subtle about her."

"Oh, indeed there is," his mother placidly informed him.

But again the conversation was interrupted by a new arrival.

It was Theodora herself. She came into the dining room slim, erect, vitally alive even at this early hour in the morning. In her close hat and tailored suit she was the picture of youthful efficiency; her tanned skin above her frilly white blouse stamped her at once as an out-of-doors girl. One could visualize her as equally at home in the business world or in a canoe on a sun-

swept lake. Then one looked at her eyes and wondered. They were direct, hazel eyes, and there was something childlike, puzzled, and wistful in their depths.

"Hello, everybody," she said as she seated herself at the table. "Isn't

"But, mother, just what are you going to do?"

Sunny down yet? Perhaps I had better run up and make sure she isn't asleep."

But this last suggestion appeared to scandalize Mrs. Holliday.

"Oh, no, darling!" she said at once. "You mustn't think of such a thing. I'll send Peter up in a few minutes to call Sunny. You just eat your breakfast."

THEO looked and felt slightly surprised. The matter was of no importance, however; so Theo dismissed it and turned to John Weston.

"Have you made up your mind about that New York offer?" she asked directly.

"I rather think I'll take it," he told her. "It seems to be a sound advertising firm. After the firm I was with closed down, I determined not to work for any more unstable companies unless I was forced into a job of that sort."

"But you won't be," Peter asserted. "You're too good in your line to waste yourself like that. If I were you, I'd take Hammond & Lason's offer. If you took a room in New York you could run out here to Roselle Park for week-ends."

"Indeed you could," Mrs. Holliday said promptly, adding: "But even if you do take that position at once, you mustn't think of going into New York just yet to look for a room. You must stay with us for at least a month."

"Of course he must," Peter agreed. "He's not going to get away from here in any rush. He'll stay for a month and commute to New York the same as Theo and Nancy and I do. So, as you say, mother, that's settled."

"You're tremendously good to me, all of you," John said earnestly. "I don't believe you realize how much I've enjoyed being here these last few days."

"And we have enjoyed having you," Mrs. Holliday assured him. "I like Peter to have company. Usually the people who come here are visiting the girls." Then, as Theo arose from the table: "Are you leaving so early, dear?"

"I must," Theo explained. "This is going to be an unusually busy day; so I thought I'd go in with Peter—that is, if he intends to make this train."

"Of course I do," Peter said, rising and following her out into the hall.

Mrs. Holliday looked after them with troubled eyes; then she allowed a gentle sigh to escape her lips.

"If only Theo would not work so hard," she said pensively. "It isn't as though she were really strong."

Nancy, who thoroughly enjoyed her breakfast, paused in the act of taking a third piece of toast and regarded her mother with blank astonishment.

John, too, looked surprised.

"I should have said," he ventured, "that Theo was one of the most glowingly healthy people I have ever seen."

"Yes," again Mrs. Holliday sighed, "Theo has so much spirit. But she's by no means strong. There is not, thank heaven, anything organically wrong with her, though. Nancy and the others try to save her in every way they can. Of course Sunny and Peter forget sometimes, but I must say that Nancy is very careful of Theo."

This with an approving smile in the astonished Nancy's direction.

"Well," said John Weston, with a look of concern upon his kindly young face, "that is certainly surprising. She's so capable, you know—"

"Capable!" Mrs. Holliday exclaimed humorously. "Oh, my dear boy, Theo is as helpless as a newborn kitten! Her helplessness sometimes make me fear for her future. She might so easily marry the wrong kind of man, you know—and men are always so attracted by girls who are as helpless as Theo. But I suppose"—and here Mrs. Holliday's smile was brave and patient—"I must just hope for the best. Dear, precious, helpless little Theo! I don't want her to marry for a great many years."

Nancy, who by this time had forgotten all about the piece of toast she wanted, was staring at her mother with round, amazed eyes. So this was how she intended to put Theo over with John Weston! And she, Nancy realized, was supposed to help her mother make Theo appear everything she most certainly was not!

Well, Nancy concluded, rising hastily from the table, she might be able to help later, but at present she was totally incapable of it.

"I'll go upstairs before I leave, and hurry Sunny," she offered, making her escape from the dining room.

THAT night, when Theodora Holliday came home from the office, she mounted with lagging feet the veranda steps of their old home in Roselle Park. She felt oddly tired, and, for some obscure reason, depressed.

Why, she wondered, should she feel depressed? Of course two of the girls in the office had just become engaged and were delightfully happy. But surely, Theo reasoned, those girls had nothing to do with the weight of her heart. She was not, for instance, jealous of them. No, of course she wasn't! How could she be when she had long ago decided that, since she was obviously not attractive to men, she would never, never marry?

And having arrived at this conclusion, she wondered if John Weston were in New York or in the house.

As she entered the hall she heard voices in the living room — her mother's voice and Nancy's and—yes, John's!

Theo went to the mirror over the old table in the hall and powdered her nose. Then she removed her hat and made sure that every dark hair lay in its proper place, paying, meanwhile, only vague attention to the conversation that was taking place in the living room.

Then something that was said caught her full attention.

Nancy was explaining: "But if

you're going to let Sunny spend the week-end with Phyllis, somebody will have to drive her over, mother; so why can't Theo do it?"

"My dear"—there was a note of warning in Mrs. Holliday's tone—"don't be altogether absurd! You know very well that Theo is not allowed to drive a car unless there is some one with her who knows a great deal more about driving than she does. You know, too, that it terrifies her to drive alone. You must take Sunny over yourself, since Peter won't be here."

"Oh," said Nancy uncertainly, "yes, of course! I—I forgot about Theo not driving alone."

And out in the hall, paying scant attention to John's prompt offer to drive Sunny wherever she wanted to go, Theo stood stunned.

What, she wondered blankly, could her mother possibly mean? Terrified to drive alone! Were they, perhaps, losing their minds? Or was this—could it *possibly* be a plot of some sort?

But of what sort? Why should her own mother and Nancy, of all people, want her to appear incapable and ridiculous in the eyes of John Weston? Oh, what *could* it mean?

Should she go upstairs or into the living room, pretending she had heard nothing, and see what would happen next?

Being very young and very feminine, it did not take her long to decide this question. She went into the living room.

"Hello," she said easily. "Is dinner almost ready?"

"Hello, darling," Sarah Holliday responded. "No, dinner isn't ready. Peter will be late to-night, so we're waiting for him. But aren't you tired, dear? Sit down in the big chair and rest."

John brought the chair forward, and Theo, puzzled and wary, sank into it.

"No," she replied, "I'm not particularly tired. Why should I be?"

Mrs. Holliday smiled fondly upon her.

"That," she declared, "is what you always say."

Now what, Theo wondered, did that mean? She was certainly not always saying she wasn't tired—for the simple reason that it had never occurred to anybody in the house to ask her about it.

SUNNY came into the room, then, in search of a book. She was the baby of the family, in her last year at high school. She had pale gold hair, a tip-tilted nose, and eyes as blue as a ribbon—and she was bossed by the entire family almost as much as she was adored.

"Were you late for school again this morning?" Nancy asked accusingly.

"What do you mean 'again'?" Sunny retorted. "What reason have you for thinking I'm ever late?"

"What *reason?* Why, the time you get up, of course. And I'm sure I don't know why you're the only member of this family who can't get out of bed at a decent time."

"Oh, don't you, Miss Smarty!" the incensed Sunny exclaimed. "Well, has it ever occurred to you that I'm the only one who doesn't get paid for crawling out of bed early in the morning?"

"But, darling, you want to graduate, don't you?" Sarah Holliday asked reprovingly.

"Yes," Sunny decided, regarding

them with speculative interest, "I suppose I do. You'll all give me presents when I graduate, won't you?"

"Oh, my dear!" her mother cried, glancing reproachfully at John who had chuckled audibly. She added, as Sunny took a magazine from the table, "Shouldn't you be doing your home work instead of reading?"

"No," she was assured. "I'm going to work to-night."

Sunny crossed the room, paused in the doorway, and remembered. "Oh, I meant to tell you, Theo, that Mrs. Houston stopped me to-day and wanted me to ask you about taking the candy table for the church supper. She says she'd love to have you in charge of it, and you're to let her know."

After Sunny had left the room, Mrs. Holliday said rather hastily, "Of course you mustn't think of taking charge at that candy table, Theo."

"Why in the world not, mother?" Theo asked. "Naturally, I'm not keen about it. It won't be exactly exciting—but the church does need money, and Mrs. Houston needs some one to help her."

"Of course she does, dear. And she's so fond of you that I know she'd love to have you with her; but it is not at all the sort of thing you should undertake. Now it would be all right for Nancy to help Mrs. Houston—"

"I won't!" said Nancy explosively, feeling that there were limits beyond which she was not willing to go, even for the sake of making Theo appear desirably helpless.

She added: "Mrs. Houston didn't ask me to help her—and if you think Theo shouldn't do it, I'm not going to do it either."

John Weston arose, lighted a cigarette, and smiled down at Theo.

It seemed to her that her heart turned directly over—for there was something new and breath-taking about that smile of John's. It was so gravely sweet and—yes, so *intimate*.

"If I could take charge of the candy table for you, I would," he offered whimsically. "But somehow I don't thing I'd fit in with the decoration of the booth. It might be pink, you know. In fact, it probably would be."

Theo smiled back at him, feeling as though something light and lilting and glamorous had suddenly crept into the air she was breathing.

"If Sunny was here she would probably tell you you'd look 'swell' in pink," she bantered, much to the astonishment of her mother and Nancy. The Theodora they knew was far too direct for light badinage.

BUT if Theo was puzzling them, they were puzzling her even more. What could it all mean? she wondered helplessly.

Speculatively she regarded her mother, and realized that there was wisdom, kindliness, and strength in the face before her. Her mother's hair was parted in the middle and coiled neatly at the back; her brow was broad, serene; her eyes were humorous and steadfast. There was something majestic about her as she sat there in her simple print house dress. She was like an old Scottish chief who ruled his clan as naturally as he breathed.

Theo turned to her sister.

"Will you come upstairs with me a minute, Nancy?" she asked. "I want to show you something I bought in town to-day."

And Nancy, somewhat unwillingly, it appeared, followed her up to her room.

"Now," said Theo, closing the door

behind them, "suppose you tell me what this is all about."

Nancy looked surprised—far too surprised—she was the picture of blue-eyed innocence.

"What *do* you mean?"

"No," she was promptly informed,

"Well—it's this way: mother has some idea in her head of making you appear helpless before John—"

"But why on earth—"

"Because she thinks men don't like capable, efficient girls. She thinks they like the kind of girls who can't do any-

"Oh, John! How wonderful you were!" Theo murmured

"that doesn't go over; so don't waste time. Why is mother trying to make me look like an abject idiot?"

"You mean—because she didn't want you to take the candy table?"

"Not only that. I heard her say, just before I went into the living room, that I couldn't possibly be trusted to drive a car unless somebody capable was with me—and *you agreed with her*. Now what did it mean?"

"Oh dear!" said Nancy. Then, after a troubled pause, "I suppose I had better tell you the truth."

"I suppose you had," said Theo grimly.

thing as well as some man could do it. So she's trying to make you appear a sort of modified clinging vine. But don't blame me for that. I couldn't stop her. You know what mother is, once she's made up her mind about anything. Of course I did appear to agree with her when she spoke that way before John—but then I couldn't sit there and contradict her. You can see how it was, can't you?"

"Yes," said Theo slowly, "I see; mother thinks I am so efficient about some things that I'm unalluring—and that I have no efficiency whatsoever with men."

"Er — yes — something like that," Nancy was forced to admit. "But I wouldn't let it bother me, honey. You know mother is wonderful and all that, but still she *is* old-fashioned."

"Is she?" Theo asked thoughtfully. "I wonder."

"Of course she is," Nancy insisted. "If I were you, I'd just let her go ahead and have a grand time making me look like a shrinking violet dripping with dew. It isn't as though you were in love with John, you know—" She paused, stared at her sister with searching eyes, and then ventured: "At least, I don't *suppose* you're in love with John. You—aren't; are you?"

Theo managed to laugh. "Of course not, silly! I've never even thought of such a thing. But—don't tell mother I know anything about what she's trying to do, Nance. As you say, I might just as well let her go ahead and enjoy herself."

WHEN Nancy had left the room, however, Theo's composure dropped from her. She sat limply down before her dressing table and stared into the mirror with wide, hurt eyes.

Her mother, her wonderful, proud old mother, thought she was a failure! Of course she would not for worlds have let even Nancy know how she felt about all this, but—here Theo blinked back her tears—it was pretty dreadful. Because it was all true: she *was* a failure. For, after all, no matter how capable a girl was in other respects, if she failed to appear desirable to at least one man she was not a success.

And so far, Theo admitted frankly to herself, no man had ever appeared to find her desirable.

Down went her head upon her folded arms and on came her tears. She sobbed desolately for several minutes, feeling woefully young and forlorn and heartbroken.

She wanted to creep downstairs and crawl into her mother's lap for comfort—but then her mother couldn't comfort her, because it was her mother who had hurt her.

Oh, why, Theo wondered bleakly, didn't men like her? Nancy was three years younger, and boys had been crazy about Nancy ever since she had started school.

Theo's head came up with a jerk. She looked at herself in the mirror. Oh, what a sight she was with her nose and eyes all red from crying! Still, ordinarily her looks were all right. Men couldn't think she was ugly. But that being the case, what was wrong with her?

Then, suddenly, there came to Theo a memory which glowed through her, staying the tears and warming her heart—the memory of the smile John had just given her in the living room. He, at least, had not looked as though he found her undesirable—and, after all, what was the use of pretending to herself? John Weston was the only man she had ever seen whose smile could have rocked her heart and, later, comforted it.

She might as well be honest, Theo decided recklessly: she loved John—oh, she *did* love him! And he had smiled at her as though he had found her rather dear . . . What did it matter, then, if no other man ever admired her? John liked her, just as she was . . .

But—Theo's hazel eyes met the startled ones in the mirror—*did* John like her as she really was? For John—oh, world-rocking thought!—had just been listening to her mother's deliberately incorrect description of her!

Was it—*could* it be possible, then, that her mother was *right?* Did men really like best the girls who could never do things as well as they, themselves, could?

And suddenly Theo knew that if helplessness was what John Weston admired in girls, she would, if necessary, behave like an infant in a perambulator.

A little later, after bathing her face and dusting it with powder, she went down to dinner—and at the foot of the stairs she found John waiting for her.

"I was wondering," he began, smiling at her again in that wonderful way, "if you would like to go in to New York to-night and see a play or a musical comedy. But then I decided that that would be too much for you. You've just come from New York, and it would be tiring to make the trip again. So suppose I meet you to-morrow after office hours, if you haven't any other engagement?"

"I'd love it," said Theo simply. "But why do you think I tire so easily?"

John's smile was both tolerant and tender. "Oh, I know how little it takes to wear you out," he asserted.

"Who told you—mother?"

"Yes, and she should know."

"She should, indeed," Theo admitted. To herself she added: "I'm supposed to be delicate, too! Gosh! I believe I could easily enough act dumb, but I don't think I can ever in this world behave as though I were delicate!"

They walked side by side along the hall, out to the dining room. It was just an ordinary hall. Like the rest of Sarah Holliday's house, it was a little shabby, but comfortable and homelike.

Now, however, it seemed to Theo that the slightly threadbare runner beneath her feet was a carpet of roses, and that the old walls were spreading linden trees between which she was walking with John to the strains of the wedding march.

Love, the maker of magic, had transformed her old home into the enchanted garden wherein lay the great, glad pathway which leads to the altar.

BUT enchanted gardens fade away—far too quickly—and the pathway between the linden trees was not, Theo soon discovered, so easy to reach.

It was difficult for her to pretend to be something she was not. There had never been the slightest pretense of any sort about her. If only some situation would arise whereby she could show herself helpless in the face of John's efficiency! That might blot out from John's mind all her lapses into her former self-reliant young self.

But the days passed and no such situation arose. John took Theo to dinner and to the theater twice every week. He was tender and protective toward her. And Theo was utterly astonished to discover how much she loved being protected. After all, she concluded, if a girl didn't lean more or less upon a man, she might never know how really wonderful it could be to feel that he was a willing bulwark between her and every rough wind that blew.

And yet John did not make love to her. That was the trouble. Theo could not tell whether his protective attitude arose from love of her, or from natural chivalry toward Peter's helpless young sister.

It was all very confusing, very harrowing—for Theo loved John so wholeheartedly. It seemed to her now that her hours spent at the office were

only feverish interludes during which she strained toward the time when she could go home—home to John. What, she frequently wondered, would it be like to be going home to him in actuality—to a little house of their own—because she belonged to him?

But then—and here it seemed to Theo that iced fingers gripped her heart—what would it be like to go back to her own home after John had left it, supposing that he should leave without telling her he loved her?

Both the old house and her own heart would be, Theo knew, forever haunted—haunted by John's clear, gray eyes, by his deep, rich voice, by his slow, whimsical smile, by the sound of his footsteps. Oh, yes, John might leave her — he probably would — but the something steadfast, the everything dear about him, would linger—an invincible, torturing, precious ghost!

But Theo was determined to keep with her, if possible, a living, breathing man who loved and wanted her—and so she went on trying and failing and trying again to appear desirably dependent upon John's strength.

"I wonder," she said one night when she and John were at the theater, "what it would be like to be an actress. Even off the stage, their lives must be so completely different from ours."

"You wouldn't like the stage at all," John asserted, turning to smile at her. "In fact, you wouldn't be there very long: you'd die of stage fright some time during your first performance."

"Yes," Theo admitted ruefully, "I probably would. Besides, I never, never could act." To herself she added: "But I'm not doing such feeble acting right now!"

Then the lights went out. The curtain was going up. John's shoulder and arm were just touching hers. It was wonderful. Just their shoulders and arms touching, and yet she was suddenly, blissfully happy.

Nothing, she decided, would induce her to move, even if her arm went to sleep!

"The car won't be repaired by the time I leave to-morrow morning, will it?" John whispered as the curtain moved slowly back. "I was thinking that, since to-morrow is Saturday, if I could bring the car in to New York I would pick you up at the office and then we might drive out to that place on Long Island—"

"Poor old car!" Theo whispered back. "It's always having things done to it. No, it won't be ready early in the morning; but I'm not coming in until later to-morrow. I could stop for the car and drive it in—"

Abruptly she halted. Oh, that was wrong! That was *all* wrong!

And it seemed that John agreed.

"Drive in to New York through all the traffic!" he exclaimed softly. "Not you, dear!"

And Theo drew a long sigh of relief. She had made another mistake—oh, yes, she certainly *had*—yet John had called her "dear"!

BUT if Theo felt that she was not altogether a success in the rôle of a modified clinging vine, Peter would hardly have agreed with her.

"What's the matter with Theo, ma?" he asked one night when he was alone with Nancy and their mother in the living room. "She behaves nowadays like a cross between a prima donna and a sick kitten. What the deuce has happened to her? I wouldn't have believed that Theo could turn quaint like that."

Sarah Holliday and her daughter exchanged swift, veiled glances. Each had noticed the amazing change in Theo, but they had loyally refrained from mentioning it even to each other.

Now Mrs. Holliday coughed, moved restlessly in her chair, and returned vaguely, "I think, perhaps, you have never entirely understood Theodora, Peter. Girls are changeable, you know."

"Indeed I don't know!" said Peter with obvious thanksgiving. "I have three sisters, but just the same I think it quite possible that I shall never entirely understand any woman."

When John came home that night he told them all at the dinner table that he had found a room in New York, and was leaving them to-morrow. He had been working for Hammond & Lason for several weeks, now, and appeared to find everything quite satisfactory.

Theo sat looking down at her plate, trying to keep her lips from quivering and her eyes from filling with tears. Oh, how horrible it would be if she should cry right here before them all!

She was an imbecile, she told herself fiercely. There was no need for her to try to act spineless—she really *was*.

But, oh, John was going away! He was going to live in New York—where there were millions of lovely girls who knew all there was to know about managing men!

Well, Theo tried to reason, what of it? John had not yet gone. There was still to-night. Surely—oh, surely he would tell her to-night that he loved her!

Then Nancy suggested that John should not leave until the day after to-morrow; so that they could give him a farewell dinner the following night. John agreed to this plan, and then, almost immediately, agreed to go out with Peter as soon as they had finished dinner.

So there was no hope, Theo realized dully, of seeing John alone that night. And to-morrow they would be having a sort of party. There would be no hope then, either, of seeing John alone. No hope at all—because John had nothing to tell her.

AS soon as she could, Theo escaped to her own room. There she lay, staring into the darkness, wondering how people could live through hours like these, wondering if she would be forced to go on living until she was very old—without John.

But John would come back. He was not going far away, and he would spend frequent week-ends with them. Perhaps later . . .

Then Theo turned over and buried her face in the pillow to stifle her sobs. What was the use of trying to deceive herself? Oh, what was the *use?*. She knew that if John went away without speaking of his love it was because he did not care for her that way.

But no one could have suspected, at John's dinner party the next night, that Theo's heart was a leaden weight in her breast. She was gay and laughing, and her eyes were bright — too bright, Sarah Holliday thought.

Sarah looked at her two older daughters, Theo and Nancy, seated side by side, and wondered why mothers always wanted their girls to fall in love, since love, so dangerously often, meant suffering.

Suddenly Nancy sprang to her feet, lifted high a glass filled with wine of Peter's brewing, and announced:

"We must drink John's health. Up on your feet, every one of you! May John—"

She never finished. Beneath the hand that held the wineglass there was a swift blaze of chiffon. Nancy's flowing sleeve had caught fire from the lighted candle just beneath it.

Sunny screamed. A low gasp broke from Sarah Holliday's lips. Peter sprang up, overturning his chair. John dashed for a small rug that lay near the door.

But Theo, who was right beside that flaming sleeve of Nancy's, was quickest. With one sure, slim brown hand, she smothered the flaming chiffon; with the other hand she dashed wine upon it.

When John ran toward them, holding the rug so high that he could not see what Theo had accomplished, the fire was out. But John wrapped the rug around Nancy, drawing it close, beating upon it, believing he was smothering the flames.

All this had happened so quickly that Peter, Mrs. Holliday, and Sunny never could be sure just who had put out that fire. But Nancy knew. And Nancy never told. For after John had half smothered her in the rug, she heard Theo exclaim:

"It must be out, now! That rug would smother anything. Oh, John, how wonderful you were to think of it!"

Cautiously John unwound one end of the rug and peered inside it.

"Yes, it's out," he said thankfully, releasing Nancy entirely from her wrapping.

It soon developed, then, that Nancy's arm was badly burned, and that one of Theo's hands was in the same condition.

It was John who took Theo's hand in his, examined it anxiously, and asked, "But how did this happen? How did the fire reach you?"

And that was Theo's big chance. She had been yearning for weeks for an opportunity to prove to John that in a moment of extremity she would be helpless where he would be competent. Now her moment had arrived.

"I'm so silly," she explained hastily. "I was right here beside Nancy, but I didn't know what to do—and—well, I just sort of slapped at her burning sleeve. Of course it didn't do a bit of good, and I got burned. But that's all right. Everything's all right, now, because you saved Nancy's life, John. You—you acted so quickly, wrapping her up in that rug. Oh—you were marvelous!"

"Nonsense!" said John. His voice was gruff and his eyes were still fastened upon Theo's burned fingers. He added, "Peter got another rug. If I hadn't smothered the fire he would have done it."

"But it seems that you did do it, old man," Peter said soberly. "I—well, you know all the things I'd like to say—"

"I shall tell John later how eternally grateful we are to him," Mrs. Holliday interposed. "But just now I must take these two girls upstairs and dress their burns."

So Theo and Nancy went off with their mother. After their burns had been properly bandaged, Nancy was put to bed; but Theo went downstairs again—and, as once before, she found John waiting for her in the hall.

WITHOUT a word he led her into the living room. There was no one else there.

For a moment he stood silent before her, his eyes fixed upon her bandaged hand, his mouth stern.

"I can't help it," he said at last, "I've got to tell you—for Mrs. Holli-

day is perfectly right: you do need some one to look after you. And unless I know now that you're going to let me do it, I'll never have another peaceful minute."

"What—what do you mean?" Theo faltered.

"That I love you," John said earnestly. "Oh, I know I shouldn't tell you yet! I should make sure that this job I have is going to be all it promises to be, and I should—wait for some sign that you love me. But I—I *can't do it.* After to-night I've got to know if you think there'll ever be any chance for me, if you could ever possibly—marry me."

"And—what made you feel to-night that you—must know?" Theo asked in a half whisper.

"You did," said John conclusively. "When I learned that you had beaten so ineffectively at that fire with your precious little hand, I—felt as though I should never dare to let you out of my sight again. You see, I wouldn't know what you were going to do next that might half kill you. And I—couldn't bear it. I—love you so much. There—there just doesn't seem to be any words for it."

"Oh," said Theo, turning her radiant hazel eyes full upon him, "I love you, too, John!"

There was a brief, breathless silence, during which John stared at Theo like a man blinded by the sun. Then he strode forward, and caught her up in his arms, holding her close as though defying the world ever to take her from him.

He bent his head and crushed his lips to hers. Theo clung to him, swept by ecstasy, vibrantly, gloriously alive.

"Darling, darling, you do love me!" he marveled. "Oh, my dear, will you—marry me?"

"Yes," Theo whispered close to his lips. "Oh, yes, John!"

More kisses—awed, solemn ones, tender, magical ones, clinging, blinding ones. And then, from John:

"Now that I have you, I'll work like mad, sweetheart. I'll make something worth while out of that job of mine—just see if I don't. For you'd inspire any man. Dear, queer, precious little Theo! You're such a funny mixture of determined self-reliance and childlike helplessness. In some ways you're amazingly sure of yourself, you know, and in other ways you're just a baby. That's partly what makes you so adorable, I think—that confusing combination of self-assurance and complete dependence upon others—the only girl I have ever loved, the only girl I ever shall love."

Theo rested her head against his shoulder and drew a long, thankful sigh. So John thought she was a queer combination of self-reliance and helplessness! Of course he had arrived at that conclusion because she had sometimes forgotten to be helpless—but, oh, it was fortunate for her that he had. Now she could be her natural self, remembering only to lean always upon John—such a lovely thing to remember! Such a lovely thing to do! Why, she suddenly realized, life wouldn't be worth living if she couldn't lean upon John. Loving him was glorious, but leaning upon him was perfection.

"Will your mother mind, darling, when she knows you are going to marry me?" John asked.

"Oh, no," said Theo with perfect truth, "mother won't mind, John. She wants me to be happy."

"So do I," John declared, holding her close. "I want you to be happy right here in my arms—where I can look after you."

Tangled Heart-strings

But—this must be Joan's sweetheart! Oh, she must get away!
She took off her wedding gown to deck another bride for the man she loved!

By Ruth Ferris

Author of "The Phantom Lover"

"BUT, Joan, it means that you can't go to the masquerade!" Audrey Hill looked anxiously at her sister, where she sat curled up in the big chair, reading the letter that had just come in the afternoon mail.

"I know." Joan lifted her dark head, that was no darker than Audrey's, and her blue eyes looked into those that were so like her own.

The sisters were not twins, but resembled each other to a remarkable degree, both having the same softly curling, cloudy black hair, the violet-blue eyes fringed with long dark lashes, the faintly pink cheeks, the same small yet daintily rounded figures. Only Audrey, the elder, had a steadier look in her blue eyes, and more determination in her rounded chin.

"I know," repeated Joan slowly, "but I wasn't so crazy about the masquerade, even if you were going to dress like a man, and pretend to be my escort. But we'll have to give that up—you can wear my Carmen dress, if you like. It's evident that Aunt Belle needs me."

"Do you think she's really very ill?"

Google

queried Audrey with sympathy in her tone.

"Oh, no, just one of her old attacks. But as long as she asks me to come, I'm going. After all, she's been very good to me, you know. If I hadn't been making her a visit, I'd never have met Ted."

"And what a calamity that would have been!" laughed Audrey. "You and your Ted! I'm sure the mail trains and boats between here and South America must have to put on extra cars to take care of the letters you write him. But of course I've never seen him, so I can't be expected to understand!"

Joan's only reply to her sister's gentle teasing was an absent smile as she stared thoughtfully into the fire.

"Audrey," she said after a moment, "I've been keeping something from you."

"Well, 'fess up, child. What is it?"

"I had a letter from Ted last week, and he said that he might not have to stay in South America the full two years, as we thought he would. In fact, he might be able to come home any time now!"

"No, really?" Audrey jumped to her feet. "Oh, Joan, I'm so glad for you!" She began to walk, with much mock dignity, across the living-room floor, humming "Here Comes the Bride."

"Goose!" laughed Joan, flinging a pillow at her. "Oh, I've got to hurry and pack if I'm to catch the six o'clock train! Loan me a couple pairs of silk stockings, will you, Audrey?"

After she had helped Joan pack, had driven her to the station, and started her on the all-night ride to the city where Aunt Belle lived, Audrey went rather disconsolately back to the house.

She was not sure whether she wanted to go to the masquerade, even though it was one of the main events of the season. She and Joan had planned to go as Carmen and her Toreador, so now, of course, Audrey had no escort. But perhaps it would be rather fun, going to a ball all alone, like Cinderella. Perhaps her prince would be there waiting for her, too.

Audrey laughed at herself as she ran out to the kitchen, to tell Hilda, their one servant, to prepare only a light dinner.

SO at ten o'clock, "Carmen," gay in her Spanish shawl and trailing ruffles of red silk, made her way into the crowded ballroom. It was a multi-colored, swirling tangle of mad gayety.

Audrey looked about her eagerly. At first the room seemed just a hazy whirl of color; then her eyes began to pick out figures. There were policemen and clowns, Harlequins and ballet dancers, Turkish girls and pirates.

For a moment she stood there watching the gay scene, then suddenly she was swept into some one's arms, and out on the dance floor. She looked up laughingly, into a painted clown's face that grimaced at her. It was fun to be one of the dancers, a part of the gay revel. What a shame Joan had to miss all this!

From the clown's arms she was swept, unresisting, into the embrace of a burly policeman. Audrey laughed, and accepted it all as part of the fun. Nobody knew anybody else—there were no partners—it was just a happy, laughing group.

After an hour of dancing, however, she escaped from the noisy ballroom, and ran up some steps to a palm-shaded balcony. It was deserted at the moment, and she sank gratefully into one

of the wicker seats. She was breathless, and one of her red silk ruffles was torn.

For a moment, though, she was content just to lean back and rest. She had been having a good time, even without Joan—but—here was a Cinderella at the ball, and there was no prince in evidence. There was certainly a hitch somewhere in the proceedings, thought Audrey whimsically.

She adjusted the strings that held her red silk mask in place, and then bent over to see what she could do about the ruffle.

Suddenly, from somewhere in the palms behind her, came a loud "Hist!"

She straightened with a jerk, and looked around, startled. The palms parted, and there stepped out the tall figure of a man in evening clothes, complete even to the tall silk hat and the white gloves. His eyes gleamed mysteriously through the slits in the little black silk mask that covered half his face. He had a tiny black mustache, waxed to sharp points, and his lips were set in a smile that was evidently meant to be mysterious, if not actually sinister.

"Shhhh!" he whispered, white-gloved finger to his lips.

"Who are you?" asked Audrey, rather startled.

The man slipped into the seat beside her.

"Do you mean to say you don't know me?" he whispered. "Why, I'm Raffles, the Gentleman Burglar!"

"Oh!" laughed Audrey. "Well, you can't scare me. I have no jewels for you to steal, Mr. Raffles."

"No jewels? Ah, but I don't steal jewels any more! They have become tame—not fit prey for my well-known talents. Nowadays I steal—" He paused tantalizingly.

"What?" queried Audrey, entering into the spirit of the comedy.

"Hearts!"

"Oh!" The girl jumped quickly to her feet, in mock alarm, both hands over her heart. "Oh, please, Mr. Raffles, don't steal my heart! Why, it's the only one I have!"

She was laughing softly, but suddenly her laughter ceased as the man, too, sprang to his feet. He had lost his teasing, carefree manner—had become intense, serious. Before Audrey knew what he was doing, he had seized her in his arms and was straining her desperately to his heart.

His head bent to hers.

"Darling!" he whispered hotly. "I searched all over this place for you! And I've found you—at last I've found you! Sweetheart, you don't know how I have missed you, longed for you! The days were so long, and the nights—oh, the endless nights! But now I have you, and we'll never, never part again! You seem changed, somehow, but I knew you instantly—my own love!"

Gasping, surprise holding her speechless, Audrey tried to struggle against him, but he only held her closer. Then his lips were on hers, ardent, compelling, and suddenly she went limp. She did not know what magic enchained her, but suddenly he ceased to be a stranger and became some one infinitely dear and precious—some one she had waited for all her life. She was quite unaware that she had returned his kiss.

Suddenly realization—and sanity—rushed over her. His grip on her relaxed a little; with a quick little movement she was out of his arms, and had darted away, down the stairs. Unheeding his calling, pleading voice behind her, she dashed madly through the

costumed throng, along the halls and out of the building.

ONCE in a taxi, and speeding down the street, she drew a long breath that was half a sob. What in the world had happened to her? What madness had possessed her—to let a perfect stranger hold her in his arms—kiss her? Was she utterly insane?

Then remembrance of the thrill of his arms about her, the mad intoxication of his kiss, overwhelmed her, and she buried her face in her hands.

"Raffles—a thief—of hearts!" she murmured softly to herself.

Of course he had mistaken her for some one else, but it was her own reaction to what had happened that confused and frightened her. Was it possible for any one to fall in love like this—all in one moment of mad, heart-tearing emotion?

At last she realized that the taxi had stopped in front of her own home. In an unheeding daze, she paid the driver, let herself in with her latchkey, and went slowly up to her room. She had not the faintest desire to go back to the party. All that could happen in one evening, had happened—and now she was alone with the strange, the unbelievable thing that had come into her life.

She tried to argue with herself, but she could come to but one conclusion. She was in love with a man she had seen for but ten minutes—an absolute stranger, whom she would perhaps never see again. It was too utterly absurd, but it was the truth.

After a sleepless night, Audrey was listlessly toying with her ten-o'clock breakfast, when Hilda announced that a young man was calling. A young man!

With a white face, Audrey dropped her napkin, rose, and hurried into the hall. There stood a tall, lean, bronzed young man, whose blue eyes smiled down into hers. He started eagerly toward her; then he stopped abruptly, and looked at her with a puzzled air.

"I—I wanted to see Joan," he murmured. Then he smiled, and his smile was amazingly charming, Audrey thought. "I know," he said quickly. "You're Joan's sister! I'm so glad to know you! I'm Ted Mercer!"

Suddenly he came very close to her, and stared intently down into her eyes, while his smile faded. As for Audrey, she was staring at him, white to the lips, and with her heart in her eyes.

"You!" she cried agonized.

There was a long, tense moment of silence between them. Then, without a word, he reached into his pocket, drew out a little false mustache and a black silk mask, and showed them to her. The girl gasped.

"It—it was I, last night," she murmured in a low tone. "And you thought I was Joan!"

"Yes," replied Ted Mercer slowly. "I wanted to surprise her, so I didn't write just when I was coming. I got into town about ten thirty last night, and came directly here. But your servant told me that 'Miss Hill' had gone to a masquerade, dressed as Carmen. That appealed to my sense of romance. I had a dress suit with me, so I bought the mustache and the mask—I was going to tease Joan by appearing suddenly at the masquerade. But—it is nearly two years since I have seen her, and at that we had known each other only three weeks, when we became engaged. But of course you know all about that. You—you are amazingly like your sister!"

"Yes," stammered Audrey. "People have sometimes made mistakes—"

"As I did." There was an odd quaver in his voice. "Can you possibly forgive me?"

"There is nothing to forgive. It—it was just a mistake, of course. But you are wondering where Joan is. Aunt Belle—you remember Aunt Belle?—was taken ill, and sent for her. Joan said she wouldn't stay long—she was going to telegraph—"

Audrey chattered on, scarcely knowing what she was saying. But all the time, in the back of her mind, was the persistent refrain, "It was Ted Mercer, Ted Mercer. Joan's sweetheart. You've fallen in love with your sister's sweetheart!"

Even as they both tried, with casual conversation, to bridge the awkwardness of the moment, the doorbell rang insistently, and presently Hilda came in with a telegram.

Audrey tore it open, and read it.

"It's from Joan," she told Ted. "She's coming on the four fifteen to-morrow. Aunt Belle is better. Won't—won't she be surprised to see you!"

"Yes, I—I suppose so. I'll meet her train. I—good-by, Audrey."

He grasped her hand, gave it a quick shake, dropped it as if he had burned his fingers, and in another moment was gone. With a dazed, hopeless look in her eyes, Audrey sank slowly into a chair, staring absently at the telegram which she still held. Joan was coming home to-morrow. Joan was going to marry Ted Mercer. But Ted Mercer had kissed her, Audrey—and would anything in the world ever wipe out the memory of that kiss?

It was four o'clock the next afternoon, when Ted Mercer rushed, without even stopping to knock, into the Hill home. Hearing his running footsteps, Audrey hurried into the kitchen, where she had been talking to Hilda. At sight of his white face, and the newspaper clutched in his hand, Audrey stopped short, and her hand flew to her throat.

"What—what is it?" she gasped.

"Have you seen the papers?"

"No—no! What—what has happened?"

"The—the train!" He choked suddenly, and jerked open the paper. There were the black, staring headlines: "Twenty Killed in Train Crash."

"Joan?" whispered Audrey, her voice a mere wisp of sound.

"Yes. I—I've telegraphed. There was a fire that entirely destroyed three of the coaches—and no one of Joan's description among the passengers who were saved There—there's no doubt that Joan—Joan—"

Suddenly Audrey was not hearing him any more, and everything was black before her eyes. With a pitiful little moan she crumpled to the floor.

TIME passed, dragging on leaden feet, until it was six months from that dreadful day when Audrey realized that she had lost her sister. It was inevitable that mutual loss and mutual sympathy should draw her and Ted together. They had both, it seemed, forgotten that mad yet joyous moment under the palms, when hearts as well as faces were masked. The young man's attitude toward her now was more that of a loving, sympathetic brother—so much so that the girl was really surprised when one day he asked her to marry him.

"You're so sweet, Audrey," he said, taking her hand gently in his. "You've been wonderful, and I can't bear to think of not always having you. I'll do my best to make you happy. I—I'm sure it's what Joan would have wished."

Audrey looked at him a little wistfully. She was remembering that ecstatic moment when he had mistaken her for Joan—when "Raffles" had kissed her, and had stolen her heart, to be his forever.

Ted slipped his arm about her shoulders, and drew her gently to him. She yielded, but there was a little hurt feeling at her heart. Where was the impetuosity, the wild passion that had characterized him before?

"You haven't said 'yes,' dear," he whispered.

"Do I have to say it?"

His arm tightened about her, and his lips pressed hers gently. Audrey sighed a little. This was not like that other kiss—but what was the use of wishing for the impossible? Perhaps romance was like that—just one wild, glorious moment, and then over with forever. She loved Ted with a love that was rooted in the depths of her being. Even if he gave her only the prosaic affection, she knew they could be happy.

The days passed quickly, while she prepared for the quiet wedding that was to be held in her old home.

A breathless, bare-headed Ted was calling her frantically

There were times, though, when Audrey would look at the beautiful white satin dress as if it were something strange to her—a dress that she was fated, somehow, never to wear. Then she would shrug her shoulders, and try to laugh at her own vague fancies.

Of course Ted loved her. Perhaps not with the wild young first love that he had given to Joan, but she was sure that he was fond of her. They were friends—comrades. Wasn't that a better basis for marriage, anyway? She tried not to long for the thrill, the youthful joy and mad abandon that might have been hers—that had been hers for a few brief moments.

At last came the day that was to make her the wife of Ted Mercer. It was a day filled with sunshine—she was glad for that. It seemed to help the odd disquiet that seized her heart at intervals.

She was standing in front of the long mirror in her own room, adjusting the exquisite lace veil that had been her mother's. The soft white satin of the wedding gown swathed her body, falling in graceful folds to her feet. The hands with which she pinned the veil trembled a little. She had refused help in dressing—she wanted to be alone, she told every one. And she had seen in their eyes that they understood. It was Joan who should have been beside her, helping her adjust the veil, exclaiming at the beauty of the gown.

Audrey sighed shortly, and gave the veil a little twitch. The orange blossoms were on her dressing table, across the room. She had not heard her door open and close again, very softly. She turned from the mirror—and suddenly sank back against it, while the color drained from her face, and the breath left her body.

There, standing with her back against the closed door, was—Joan!

FOR a long moment Audrey stared, her face paper white. Then she took one hesitating step forward.

"Joan!" she whispered. "Joan—it *is* you?"

"Of course it is," replied the other girl slowly. "Oh, Audrey!"

With a little rush, she was in her sister's arms, and they were both sobbing, murmuring frantic, incoherent words. But at last, some semblance of calmness came to Audrey and she held the other away at arm's length.

"We—we thought you were dead!" she gasped. "We were certain that you'd been killed and—and burned—in the train wreck. Joan—Joan, *what happened?*"

A peculiar expression crept over Joan's face. At last she spoke, and her words came slowly and with difficulty.

"I—I don't know," she replied.

"You don't know?" gasped Audrey. "What in the world do you mean?"

"Oh, Audrey, it's terrible! I—I can't realize how such a thing could have happened to me. But listen, Audrey—this is the absolute truth. I don't remember a thing, after the wreck!"

As her sister stared at her in amazement she continued, speaking in a dazed, hesitating fashion.

"Aunt Belle soon got better, and I started for home, that day—that dreadful day. I was happy because I was coming home—I was thinking about Ted. And then came the crash—a dreadful moment when the whole world seemed to have come to an end. I remembered being thrown from the seat—then a terrible blow on my head. And that is all I remember—until yesterday!"

"Yesterday! Why, *Joan*—"

"Yes. Yesterday I found myself standing on a street corner in Chicago, waiting for a bus! I was alone—I had on strange clothes—I carried a strange purse! But my purse had money in it—I took a taxi to the station, and managed to catch a train that

was just leaving. I came straight here, but I saw there was a party downstairs, so I ran up the back stairs—and here I am!"

"Joan—Joan!" Audrey could only gasp.

"I know." Joan sank into a chair, and pressed her fingers over her eyes. "I feel so dazed—uncertain—oh, I don't know just how I feel! Dear, how long ago was the wreck?"

"Six months."

"Six months!" Joan leaped to her feet, with a look of horror and incredulity on her face. "You can't really mean that? I thought maybe it was a few days—but six months! Oh, Audrey, where have I been—*who* have I been, all that time?"

She dropped weakly onto the bed, again holding her hands before her face. In an instant Audrey was beside her, holding her in soothing arms, forgetting her own plight in concern at her sister's distress.

"Don't think any more about it, darling," she pleaded. "Everything will be all right now. Oh, I'm so happy to have you again—to know that you're alive!"

Suddenly Joan sat up, and stared at her sister, looking her up and down as if she were seeing her for the first time.

"Why, Audrey," she gasped. "That's a wedding dress, isn't it? Why, yes, there's your veil! So that's why all those people were downstairs—you're getting married! And you didn't even have a sweetheart! Who is he, Audrey?"

Audrey was stricken dumb.

"Why do you stare at me like that?" demanded Joan. "You're as pale as a ghost. What is the matter?"

Audrey shook her head. Her dry lips could not form the words.

"What's the matter?" asked Joan again. "You haven't answered my question. Who's the lucky man?"

Audrey tried to speak; at last she forced the words from her aching throat.

"I—I was going to—to marry—Ted!"

"Ted — Ted Mercer?" whispered Joan.

"Yes."

For a long moment Joan said nothing. There was an odd expression on her face, as if she were trying very hard to remember something—and failing.

"Well," she said at last, very slowly, "isn't that—isn't that a joke?"

"We thought you were dead," pleaded Audrey miserably. "Ted told me it was—was what you would have wished, so we—we were going to—"

"Audrey," interrupted Joan, "do you love Ted?"

"No—no!"

The lie came hurriedly, gaspingly, from her lips. Suddenly she began fumbling frantically with the hooks of the white satin gown.

"I don't love him," she panted, "and he doesn't love me! It was always you he loved, Joan—always you! Here, take off your dress, quick!"

"Why? Audrey—Audrey, what are you going to do?"

"You're going down there—as the bride! Ted will be the happiest man on earth!"

She was frantically pulling the wedding dress off, forcing it onto Joan's unwilling body.

"But, Audrey—the shock!"

"It 'll be all right. Happiness never killed anybody! As soon as everybody sees that it's you, not me, we can explain! Hurry, they're playing the wedding march now!"

"But, Audrey—I can't—I don't—"

"Hush! Hold your head still now, till I get this veil fixed!"

She pushed and pulled the dazed, unwilling Joan about the room. It was really only a few moments before the white-faced bride was ready. Having hurriedly arrayed herself in a street suit, Audrey surveyed Joan critically.

She was beautiful; there was only that look of dazed uncertainty in her eyes. But it would be all right—it must be all right. It was Joan that Ted had wanted, all the time. And she was giving him Joan; she was giving him happiness. What did her own broken heart matter?

AT the door, Joan hung back.

"Audrey," she pleaded in a low voice, "I don't want to do this! It isn't right—it can't be right!"

"Yes, it is!" insisted Audrey. She was excited, almost incoherent, scarcely knowing, herself, what she was saying. "Everything will be all right—you and Ted are going to be happy—happy!"

She opened the door, and pushed the unwilling girl out ahead of her. There was an open stairway, and at its foot stood Ted, his face raised eagerly. Beside him was the minister, and beyond was the little group of friends and neighbors.

To the head of the stairs, Audrey led Joan, and stood there with her arm about the trembling figure. She herself was trembling uncontrollably, but she did not know it.

"Look, everybody!" she cried in a clear, high, hysterical voice. "It's Joan. She wasn't killed—she's come back to us, alive—safe! You all know that Ted and Joan were engaged—now you're going to see them married!"

Her voice stopped abruptly, and for a long moment there was a silence that a breath would have disturbed. Every one stared—amazed, incredulous.

Then, with a gasp, Ted bounded halfway up the stairs.

"Joan! Audrey!" he cried.

Audrey glanced at her sister. Joan's eyes, wide like a sleepwalker's, were fixed on Ted's face. She gave the girl a little push, and guided her to the first step. Like a swaying lily, Joan descended the stairs, slowly, halting at every step, and slowly Ted backed down, before her, until he stood again at the foot. With an instinct for the dramatic, the pianist had resumed the wedding march—then there was a crash of chords, and Joan stood beside Ted, in front of the gasping, round-eyed minister.

Swaying there at the head of the stairs, Audrey clutched the banisters, as she gazed downward at the dramatic little scene. Suddenly, for a moment, Ted's face was raised to hers. She could not read the expression in his eyes.

Was it appeal she saw there?

Then the minister, his composure almost restored, was opening the little black book. His resonant voice was booming out in the echoing room:

"Dearly beloved—"

With a little moan that nobody heard, Audrey shrank back in the shadows of the upper hall.

She could not listen to the words that would give, forever, the man she loved to the sister she loved. Suddenly she darted into her own room. Her bag was packed, ready for the wedding journey. She snatched it up in one hand—her hat, purse, and gloves in the other. Where was she going? She didn't know; she didn't care.

In a moment she was in the hall, was stealing down the back stairs.

There was a great deal of noise there in the front of the house—every one seemed to be talking at once. Could the ceremony be over so soon—was that the buzz of questions, comments and congratulations she was hearing now?

But what did it matter? What did anything matter? She must get away at once—before her heart broke into a million pieces!

She scarcely knew how she got to the railway station. There was a train ready to leave. Without even stopping to find out where it was going, Audrey handed her suitcase to a porter, and swung up on the lowest step. And then—

"Audrey! Audrey! Audrey!"

She turned, one hand clutching her heart. It was Ted—breathless, bareheaded, tearing down the platform beside the train, frantically calling to her.

There was a cry of "All Aboard"—the train began to move—but Ted had reached her, had lifted her bodily off the train steps, and was holding her clasped desperately to his heart. The grinning porter swung the suitcase—it landed with a thud beside them.

"Ted!" gasped Audrey. "What—what—"

"Little idiot!" He was alternately shaking and kissing her, while a bevy of admiring, grinning station hands gathered about them.

"But I don't understand!" She tried to push him away, but he refused to be pushed. "I don't understand! Ted—Joan—"

"Come on home, then, sweet numskull, and everything will be explained to you! Here, pile into my car!"

He refused to answer her frantic questions until they had entered the Hill home. And there, before Audrey's amazed eyes, stood a smiling, happy Joan—and beside her, was a perfectly strange young man!

FOR a few moments every one talked at once, until at last, with an imploring gesture, Audrey put her hands to her ears.

"Will somebody please tell me what it's all about?" she pleaded.

For answer, Joan clasped her in eager, loving arms.

"Oh, Audrey, I'm so happy—so happy!" she cried. "I can remember everything!"

"You can remember—" gasped Audrey.

"Yes! The minister had only said a few words, when Paul came rushing in—he was calling my name! I whirled around and saw him—and suddenly I remembered everything!"

Audrey looked bewildered.

"Saw whom?" she asked helplessly.

The strange young man stepped forward, and smilingly slipped an arm about Joan.

"Let me explain to her," he said in his deep, pleasant voice. "Audrey—I'm going to call you that, you know!—I'll tell you a very short and very important story. Six months ago I was driving my car along the road toward Chicago—and the road ran beside the railroad tracks. I was just in time to witness a very terrible wreck. Of course I stopped, and did what I could. I was fortunate enough to arrive just in time to rescue a very beautiful"—his arm tightened about Joan, and she smiled up at him—"but unconscious young lady. Then—all was confusion—fire and screams, and crowds all about. There was nothing more I could do. I had business in Chicago that could not wait—I supposed that the young lady had been on her way to Chicago, and that when she regained conscious-

ness, she would direct me to her friends or relatives. She became conscious just before we reached Chicago—but she could not tell me who she was, where she came from, nor where she was going!"

He paused for a moment. Every one was breathlessly listening, and Joan was looking adoringly up into his face.

"What could I do?" he continued. "I put the girl under my mother's care. I made inquiries—searched—all without result. We had only one clew—the name 'Joan' marked on a handkerchief. And you wouldn't believe me if I told you how many 'Joans' there are in this country!"

He gave Audrey a smile, and Joan a loving look, then went on:

"Finally Joan acknowledged that she returned my love, and we were married!"

"Married!" exclaimed Audrey. She looked, white-faced, at Ted—then at Paul, then at Joan.

"It's all right, dear!" laughed Joan. "I'm not a bigamist—Paul got here just in time!'

"I certainly did!" he put in quickly. "But to finish the story—yesterday Joan went down town to leave her wedding ring with the jeweler, to have it made smaller—and then she didn't come home! She just disappeared! But I managed to trace her at the railroad station, and got the next train—here! You can imagine how I felt when I found her being married to another man!"

"All my fault!" moaned Audrey. "But this whole thing is quite impossible. If anybody'd told me such things could happen, I wouldn't have believed it!"

"Anything's possible for a Gentleman Burglar—a Mr. Raffles!" put in Ted, suddenly. "Look here, Joan—that wedding dress has been scarcely used—would you mind climbing out of it? I have a strange, but not unreasonable desire to be married to Audrey, right here and now, before she tries to pass off another substitute on me!"

So a few moments later it was Audrey who descended the stairs, proud and happy, her face glowing as if a lamp had been lighted inside her. Her eyes, wide, incredibly blue, were fixed on Ted's. And when the brief ceremony was over, and her husband clasped her in his eager arms, she whispered something very softly, so that only he could hear.

"My thief—my dear thief—of hearts!"

And then his lips, tender and thrilling, pressed hers.

Rosalie stirred resentfully as the voice summoned her from dreams

Her Port of Dreams

Not in a noon-drowsy garden; not to seductive strains of midnight violins; but with her hands in the dishwater of a ship's galley Rosalie found romance

By Lucy B. Tinsley

ROSALIE stirred resentfully. A chill shivered down her spine. Instinctively she pulled her coat down over her silk-clad knees.

"For the love of catfish!"

The boom of the voice in her ears jarred her. She struggled with returning consciousness. Disappointment stabbed her. It had been a dream—the red moon shining through cross-legged palms, the foam-crested waves that slid onto a beach like crushed diamonds, the tall, dark-eyed lover who held her close, whispering

the sweet, breath-taking things that made her feel all jiggly inside.

"Ahmmm!" The voice cleared its throat.

Gripped with sudden terror, Rosalie squeezed her lids shut. She was not in the movies at home in Brooklyn, but curled up in the lee of a smokestack somewhere on the Atlantic. She had hidden there when darkness and quiet had descended on the S. S. Tehuantepec, California bound.

Gone now was the jauntiness that had filled her when, mingling with the other passengers, she had tripped up the gangplank at noon. She couldn't have stood the routine of the soap factory office another second. She couldn't be any worse off either for leaving it behind her. Her stepmother, "Jane," who had put her there, had even collected her pay.

The world, which she had glimpsed only in the movies, had beckoned. With her toothbrush and some wisps of pink underwear in one capacious coat pocket, a gilt compact, her change purse and some chocolate bars in the other, she had answered the call.

Eighteen and flagrantly pretty, it might have been the trim cut of her clothes, the extra full passenger list or the pace which she had set herself, and maintained, which had been responsible for her not being apprehended.

"I say!" The voice took on an annoyed edge.

Unable to ignore it longer, Rosalie opened her eyes. They focused themselves on a pair of sturdy dark blue trousers. The suspense was over. No longer would she need to dodge them or their counterparts. What she had not anticipated was the all-gone, spanked-little-girl feeling they produced in her.

She looked up, past wide shoulders to stern gray eyes peering from under heavy straight brows, and a chin that might have been quarried in Vermont. Above a visored cap, the word "Captain" glittered in the moonlight.

"I—you see," she began, chattering desperately as she sat up and pushed a straying brown lock out of her eyes, "I was just a little tired and I thought I'd take a nap. Do you mind?"

"Mind?" The man bit his lip, hesitated a second and scowled. "Really—"

"Be-cause I don't." Rosalie swallowed a lump in her throat. Her red mouth, trembling bravely, parted in a smile. "I—I always sleep this way, all scrooged up like a cat, I mean." She was playing against time and the chin. She had never realized before how hopeless a chin could be, how unrevealing.

"Hmmm!" The captain stroked the stern feature thoughtfully. "You appear to be quite gifted. Perhaps you wouldn't mind showing me your ticket? May I assist you?" He held out his hand.

She ignored it. "My—my purse." The blood surged into her cheeks.

"Ah, yes, your purse; in your stateroom probably?"

She squirmed under the rising inflection. Did ever a worm feel so small, so utterly miserable? Her heart thumped and seemed to turn over. Unaided, she scrambled to her feet.

"I just had to get to California," she half-sobbed, "and I had no money, no real money, that is—"

"So you decided to stowaway," the captain snapped, his legs spread wide apart.

Rosalie, feeling as though she had been indicted for murder, nodded. "Just what is it they—you—do to stowaways?" she asked in a small

voice. She didn't register a bit as she thought she would. As an actress, she was a total failure.

"Put 'em to work. When we reach port, they're sent back, or locked up for vagrancy." The captain dismissed the matter.

"I wouldn't like the vagrancy very well, but I might work. I—I thought of that as a possibility." Rosalie's eyes were dusky in the half light. Glints of gold shot through their brownness, vying with the bronze of her tumbled hair.

The captain looked over her head. "I didn't say female stowaway," he enunciated after a pause. "Here, Julio," he hailed a passing cabin boy, "tell Mr. Johnson I'd like to see him in my office. His stateroom was lighted as I passed."

"Yes, sir." Automatonlike, the boy, apparently a Central American, touched his cap.

"And now, miss, come with me," the captain ordered, leading the way.

MEEKLY Rosalie followed. She felt awed at his back. The muscles looked as though they had been molded in blue cloth. He was not over thirty, but there his resemblance to a screen hero ceased. As far as any appreciable effect on him was concerned, she might have been an eggshell trying to batter Gibraltar. In the movies, after one look into her eyes, he would have melted, assured her that the tiny bit she ate, the little room she occupied, didn't figure at all.

But life was different. Evidently, in spite of his good looks, he had one of those Lord-of-Creation complexes Jane was always warning her of.

Mr. Johnson was already in the captain's office when they arrived. A paunchy little man with china-blue eyes, purple cheeks and a bald spot, he had the pleased expression of one who has unexpectedly run across something he has mislaid. The cap dangling in his hand was labeled "Purser."

The captain, motioning Rosalie to a stuffed leather chair, took its counterpart behind a broad, flat-topped desk. "You recognize this young lady, Mr. Johnson?"

"Rather. I noticed her coming aboard, and a time or two later. Then she disappeared."

The captain drummed on the desk with his pencil. "It's your place to keep track of the passengers, Mr. Johnson. You've no record of her, then? She has no ticket?"

"Sorry, sir."

"Don't waste your sympathy. She's not entitled to it. No stowaway is."

"But—er, being a lady, sir."

The captain wheeled in his chair. "There are some things a lady doesn't do. Cheating is one of them."

"There are some things a gentleman doesn't do. Insulting a woman is one of them." Rosalie jumped to her feet, her eyes smarting, the pulse in her neck throbbing. Her voice broke. "I hate you. You're hard and cruel. I wish your old ship would break in two, and everybody would be saved but you."

"You could put her in the galley, sir. They're short-handed there; that Guatemala boy you sent down's worse than nothing." The purser's blue eyes popped. Something in their glance seemed to strip the girl.

She recoiled, leaning against the door jamb, panting, baffled. With all her soul she wished herself back in Brooklyn, at the endless filing and typing, exposed to the whining and nagging of the stepmother she had always considered an error of judgment on her dead father's part.

"When I want any advice from you, Mr. Johnson," the captain thundered, "I'll ask for it. Tell Sparks to radio the New York office for instructions. Meanwhile, put the young woman in the third cabin, alone. Do you understand?"

Johnson's face was magenta. "Very well, sir."

"The old man must have eaten a keg of nails for his supper," he observed jocularly as, outside the captain's door, he touched Rosalie's elbow.

She did not answer. The long sweep of upper deck was empty. A nipping wind, coming up from the north, had chopped the sea into tiny swells. She shrank from the man's too obvious friendliness. They descended the companionway to the deck below.

But the purser was undaunted. "He gets fed up on the ladies, I suppose," he rambled on, "being as it's part of his duties to entertain the spenders on this trip. Company picks 'em young and good-looking for that purpose, when they can get 'em, which isn't too often. Helps to make the line popular.

"Captain Spicer isn't made that way. Condemns 'em all to perdition, when they're not around. Eases his feelings, I expect. Opportunity of his life to take it out on a female he don't have to truckle to, being you, girlie. Funny for a young guy to be like that! Me, for instance, I'd have found something easy for you to do, mendin' the linen or so, and kept my eye on you, helped you out."

Another long stretch of deck, another companionway. Things growing smaller and cheaper, a mite darker, as they went down.

Jingling his keys, Mr. Johnson stopped before a narrow door; opened it with a flourish. "This one's empty. Not so full up on third class this trip. Make yourself comfy, girlie. Cap's just as apt to forget you as not, now that he's turned you over to me. That's his little way—thinks it's beneath his dignity to interfere in his departments, or maybe good discipline. Not a bad guy, though, cap. Some of the men are strong for him. Others ain't so keen."

IT was a tight little room, intensely clean and plain, that Rosalie found herself in, but to her it looked like a slice of heaven. As she had never longed for anything, she longed to throw herself on the lowest of the narrow white berths and bury her head in the hard little pillow.

She felt so wretched, so criminal. From every corner, Captain Spicer's hard, uncompromising chin, his deep-set gray eyes under their heavy brows, accused her. "A lady never cheats."

A mist gathered before Rosalie's eyes. She caught her underlip between her white teeth. "Do you suppose, after the way I acted," she asked after a minute, "he, your captain, will let me stay here, not put me off or send me home or anything?"

The fat little man swayed on his too-small feet. His cobalt eyes widened, closed again. "Hmm—no telling what that gazebo will do. But, well, you know how the saying goes, girlie, 'we all flop sooner or later.' That's me all over, Mabel. Gosh"—he edged a little closer—"you've got the prettiest eyes I ever saw, not dark or light, just sort of golden."

"No, I don't know." Rosalie studied the scrubbed planks of the floor. She had met his kind before, innumerable times on the silver sheet, once or twice in real life. "No one has ever told me. I'd like to be alone, if you don't mind."

Rosalie shrank back in affright just as a heavy hand descended on his wrist

"Quite so." The man looked nonplused. With a prodigious handkerchief, he mopped the shining crown of his head. "Chickadee's tired, of course. Papa forgot. Make yourself at home. You'll find breakfast in the third dining saloon not so bad. Tra la la, see you in the morning and other cozy things."

Smiling blandly, Mr. Johnson closed the door.

Exhausted as she was, sleep did not come easily to Rosalie. She nibbled on a bit of chocolate from her coat pocket. She was not very hungry; the nibble satisfied her. The motion of the boat seemed to soothe rather than upset her physically.

But her brain was on fire.

Now she was back in the soap factory in Brooklyn, typing columns of figures that danced maddeningly out of alignment. Now she was listening to one of her stepmother's tirades, injecting the word here and there that, in place of mollifying Jane, added fuel to the flame. Now she was stealing up the Tehuantepec's gangplank, her hands in her pockets, her heart in her mouth.

Now, she was cringing, sick, ashamed, at the withering scorn of Captain

Spicer's voice. Now she was battling with him, lashed to fury at the set of his chin, the contempt in his eyes. Now she was shrinking from the soft, pink fingers of Mr. Johnson.

Now it was her name, her very own, Rosalie Kenwood, that blazed at her, winking and triumphant above the scrolly door of the Gem Theater on Court Street—why, that wasn't what she had come for!

She had just wanted to see if anywhere in the world there were cross-legged palms, a lover singing by a moon-pathed sea to her, who—

She sat up with a start, every nerve jumping into place. Through the porthole shone a disk of intense daylight. Some one was knocking at the door, a quick, staccato tap.

Rosalie leaped to her feet and reached for her coat, pulled it over her shoulders. With her heart in her throat, she unbolted the door, opening it the merest crack. "Yes?"

A flash of light in a yellow face. "Captain say you come his office now."

"With you?"

The captain's boy, Julio, immaculate in white coat and trousers, nodded. "I take you. I wait."

As Rosalie glanced at herself in the patch of mirror, she felt strangely unkempt. Hastily, not daring to take time for more, she dabbed cold water from the pitcher on eyes and fingers. She was daintiness itself; there were some aspects of her adventure which she had not considered. With deft fingers, she settled her short, sleeveless dress about her slim hips. In its crepy texture, the wrinkles did not show. Hope, as quickly as it had died, bubbled within her. Humming "A Rainbow 'Round my Shoulder," she ran a pocket comb through her hair. Warm lights tipped its chestnut waves; warmer color, deep still with the flush of sleep, glowed in her round young cheeks, tinted her lips with carmine.

With her eyes straight ahead, she followed the boy. A few passengers, shabby and clean, lounged about the deck or walked to and fro. Across the rail, the sun danced on a limitless blue sea.

CAPTAIN SPICER looked up from his desk. His lips twitched.

"Sit down," he said curtly. He was frowning at a slip of yellow paper spread out in front of him. "Radio from New York office, Miss Kenwood. Your stepmother refuses to advance your fare."

"But I didn't ask her to. I—I knew better. You—you had no business to radio her!" Of all people, Jane—Jane who had told her she "could stand on her own feet," whose favorite expression was "every tub on its own bottom"; who had "washed her hands" of her stepdaughter at least three hundred and sixty-five times the past year! Rosalie's throat ached. Angry tears stood in her eyes.

The captain chewed the thin line of his lower lip. "I have a business to do as I choose on this ship, Miss Kenwood." His voice had the clink of metal on metal. "New York, however, looked up your er—parent. For your information, the rest of the message reads: 'Treat her as you would any other stowaway and turn her over to the police at San Diego!'"

"Which means?" The girl straightened her drooping shoulders, downed the sobs that choked her. Hard, that's what he was. Lord-of-Creation stuff all right. Jane did know something. Probably it would please his vanity for her to fall at his feet, humbly beg a passage. Well, she wouldn't do it! She

could go down to the old galley, fall in her tracks before she would ask anything from him.

He studied her a minute, tapping his pencil. "Which means just what it says. I have no alternative. There is a precedent involved."

"Well, don't smash it on my account." Antagonism, deep, bitter, proud, flashed from her eyes into his.

He clutched the arms of his chair, opened his mouth, snapped it shut.

Tossing her head, Rosalie smoothed out a ringlet defiantly. "Well?" she ventured with assumed coolness.

His finger closed about a button on his desk. He pressed it viciously. As if by magic, the white-coated servant appeared. "Take this young lady to the galley, Julio. Tell Mr. Harker to put her to work. Tell Mr. Johnson she is to keep the third cabin he assigned her."

DOWN, down, past layers of decks, interminable iron stairs, Rosalie, in the wake of Julio, faltered. A leaden weight pressed in her chest. For the second time in her life she felt burned out, like a candle.

The other time had been yesterday. Then, as now, white-hot rage had seared through her, futile because unseen, unfelt, apparently, by the object of it. No other human being had ever affected her just that way. She had gone her way blithely indifferent to the little hurts that upset others. Now she wanted to double up her fists, to pound —and she did not dare.

There was something about this Captain Spicer—she couldn't have believed it about a man so young, so good-looking. In the office at home the boys had been respectfully afraid of her, when she would look at them, which wasn't too often.

Following Julio, Rosalie entered a long, low room, one side seemingly all hooded range, a confused impression of gigantic pots, bustle, confusion, mingled odors; an enormous, kewpie-shaped man, swathed in dingy white, a round cap tilted over one ear; greasy, hurrying forms, blue-jeaned, some white-aproned, some not; beads of sweat on white faces, peering eyes, grinning mouths; from a corner of the steam-filled room a chantey in full swing; dishes banging, guttural expletives.

Rosalie gulped, swayed a little—a ship's galley! Quite, quite different from the kitchen at home, small, lettuce-green, clean as a hospital—that much could be said for Jane. But it had been a trial there at times to wash a few teacups when one's head was full of bright dreams. The man with the apron wrinkling across his equator was advancing, smiling at her.

"Yes, sir, Mr. Harker." Julio, bowing, conveyed his message.

"Whew!" Harker whistled, slapped his fat thighs. "Cap's some little joker, ain't he, Julius? Full up on spud-trimmers right now, but we could use another dish-souser. That countryman of yours ain't worth a split nickle, weak in the gills or something. Hey, Miguel!"

A thin little chap bent almost double over a long sink, straightened up. In stature, he seemed an undersized boy of fourteen, all great, pathetic dark eyes that stabbed the girl to the heart. He smiled wanly. "Yes, sir."

"Lay off the chinaware a minute, Mike, and meet your new assistant. Between the two of you, you ought to make one man-sized dishwasher." Harker's eyes traveled with good-natured contempt down Rosalie's slight figure. "Get her a cup of coffee and

fixings first. We ain't got no time to be sick down here."

"Yes, sir." Blank-faced, Miguel wiped his scalded-looking hands on a soggy apron.

"More up against it than I am!" Rosalie half whispered the words to herself. Tears blinded her. For the moment, in her sympathy for another human being, a different kind of human being, her own predicament was forgotten.

In the succeeding few days, only the fact that the Filipino boy, delicately reared and working his way back to his own country, really needed her help, kept her from going under. Her back raged at the endless lifting, sorting, washing and stacking of mountains of heavy plates, cups and saucers. Her nerves cried out at the unaccustomed toil, the smells, the noises, the coarse jests and crude oaths of potato peelers and scullery boys.

Where was her dream now?

No one had time to be familiar. Because Rosalie did not complain, they did not know that half the time she was so faint and dizzy that they, to her, were just a sea of hard eyes and cruel mouths, gaping at her, making fun of her, because her very presence stirred something in them that must have an outlet.

Only Miguel was kind, Miguel the little Guatemalan whose wrists were smaller than her own, whose frail body looked as though it would break in two. He it was who tempted her reluctant appetite with tasteful tidbits when she could not eat from the galley dish. He it was who divided up their joint work so that her standing hours should not be so cruelly long, who put her to piling and sorting dishes when her hands felt as though the flesh would drop from the bones. In return, she listened to stories of his native San José, advised him as best she could.

HER nights in her cabin were long, dreamless, drugged with fatigue and semistarvation. Coming and going, she caught herself hoping for a glimpse of Captain Spicer. She wanted the chance to hold her head in the air, to meet his look unflinchingly. Much as she dreaded it, she wanted it more than she had ever wanted anything in her life before.

But, having disposed of her case, he had forgotten her, just as Johnson had said he would. Once, very late, she had found Johnson waiting for her. Brushing by him with a nod, she had closed her door and locked it, leaving him babbling outside.

On the fifth morning he came down to the galley. He was bristling with importance, redolent of bay rum even in its stifling atmosphere. With a "Cheerio" to Harker, he came directly to her.

Assistant cooks and scullery boys looked up from their work. A few grinned knowingly at each other, straining their ears to catch his words.

His voice was low and confidential. He stood close to her, but did not touch her. "You're all through here," he said. "I've arranged for your passage the rest of the way."

Her heart leaped wildly. She swayed a little, clutching at the edge of the sink. She was tired, so terribly tired. It was like a reprieve from Hades. The blood leaped into her pale cheeks. It was as though some pressure had been removed, letting it come upward like a fountain. She had been so rude to him. After all, he had done nothing, said nothing to make her feel as she had.

"You are good," she answered at

length through stiff lips. "Very good. Some day when I am rich and famous"—she stopped herself with a shuddering little laugh—"when I get work, that is, I will pay you."

"Say, girlie, you don't have to pay me anything. You know it. I'd have arranged this before if you hadn't been so upstage. Had about enough, though, now, haven't you? This high-horse stuff's all right in books, but not so good in real life. Come"—his voice took on a wheedling note—"get your pretty fingers out of this slop, and I'll show you what a regular time can mean."

For a long moment she looked at him, past his wavering china-blue eyes into his little soul. That for a second she could have been so deluded by a false hope! That for a second her aching body could have so pulled the wool over her eyes! She was a "cheater" perhaps, but not that kind, dear God, not that kind.

She wavered away from him. Back of her some one coughed, gently. Miguel! She had almost forgotten him. Miguel, frailer than herself—she would have left him to struggle through the two weeks they had yet to go, without her! Dear little Miguel! Kind Miguel! She set her chin at a resolute angle; plunged her hands again into the sea of scalding soapy water, the scraps of food on its surface sloshing against each other like junks in a typhoon.

"No," she replied between set teeth. "Thank you so much, but I'm staying right here where I am the rest of the way."

Johnson's hand reached for her shoulder. His pudgy fingers dug deep into her flesh. "Don't be a little fool! You can't stand two weeks more of this."

She shrank back; stifled a scream. There was a movement back of her, lightning quick. Two thin brown fingers closed about the fat, pink wrist, jerking the hand from her shoulder. With an oath, a sweating, perfumed body lunged past her. Miguel crumpled on the floor, blood streaming from his nose and eyes, his head thrown back, his mouth open.

"I'll teach you, you damned little yellow-belly, to interfere with your superior officer. And you, you little minx, you'll come off your perch yet." Elbowing aside the gaping men, even the chef himself, Johnson strode the length of the galley and up the stairs.

For a long time Miguel did not come to. Unashamed of her tear-wet eyes, Rosalie pillowed his head in her lap. With her handkerchief she wiped his forehead, exposing the welt where the skin was broken. Clumsily, their raillery forgotten, the galley help crowded about her, brought her warm, clean water. Harker himself superintended.

"Game little wop—wanted to do it myself!" he muttered.

But the boy did not rally. The feeble spurt of the candle had all but put it out, so Harker ordered the men to take him to the hospital upstairs.

And then, the excitement subsiding, Rosalie wrestled with the dishes alone.

DAILY she tried to get news of Miguel. He was worse; he was better; no one knew. Direct contact with him was not to be thought of.

At night, fearful of meeting Johnson, she slid as quickly as possible to her cabin. They were nearing the Canal, and the heat was intense. She ate but little, for she could not swallow. The very sight of the heavy dishes

made her throat contract. Miguel was dead; she was sure of it.

Once, in a frenzy of remorse, she thought of going to the captain, but pride held her back. She could not bear

"Every man is lost when he finds the one girl he can love"

to be dissected again by those cold gray eyes; be crushed by that marble chin. And yet, at night sometimes those eyes were warm, compelling, holding her to her task, stiffening her wilting spine. Sometimes that chin was soft and tremulous. Sometimes—

He did not know. Johnson had said he never meddled, never interfered with the heads of his departments.

Now that she had no one to talk to when at work, Rosalie listened more to the men. It helped her to forget herself; helped her to keep at her task. The ship was in bad shape, the engines were not running properly. A poor grade of oil was being used, and not enough of it. Something might snap at any minute, not necessarily serious, but crippling. A wiper had told the assistant cook.

It would discredit the captain, maybe cause him the loss of his ship or his transfer to a smaller one. Cap was a square shooter, but rough on any one

he thought crooked. Johnson had it in for him, so did the chief engineer. He'd block their game a couple of times. Cap didn't have a Chinaman's chance with some of the vermin that were under him; they would get him this trip most likely.

Rosalie untied her apron—a huge one of the chef's that, wrapped several times around her, saved her one dress. The afternoon was sweltering. Somewhere off Acapulco they were, a full week before they touched their next port of call, San Diego.

She ascended the steep little iron stairway leading from the galley. So deep were the men in their talk they did not notice her. She felt giddy and light-headed. Under her hand the rail was warm and sweaty like a long black arm to which, though it repulsed her, she knew she must cling or fall. And she had need of her strength, every ounce of it.

Gropingly she fought her way to the rectangle of light that was the third deck and air. The deck was, to all intents and purposes, empty. Thank Heaven! For a grateful second she braced herself against the doorway, filling her lungs to their utmost, cooling her eyes on the long, slow swells of the Pacific.

She jumped guiltily at a quick step in back of her.

"Miss Kenwood!" Captain Spicer towered over her. A deep scowl divided his heavy brows; his lips were white and clamped together. "I have just given orders that your things be moved to a cabin on the main deck," he jerked out. "My boy is attending to it for you. You will be next to the stewardess there. I have this moment learned that you've been all this time in the galley. It was contrary to my explicit orders, I assure you."

"But I was on my way to you, don't you see—" she moistened her lips, which felt dry and cracked. Her vocal cords seemed to be tying themselves in knots. "I—I couldn't let a—a dog sit over a volcano and not try to help—a little." She put out her hands in extenuation. "I don't care for myself. I'm not worth anything—"

The words tumbled over themselves in eagerness. She forgot that she was a nobody, a stowaway, a "cheater" to whom this man had deliberately handed what he considered her just deserts. The old light of enthusiasm so nearly quenched in her days of misery shone again in her brown eyes. Hot color flamed in her cheeks as she told him what she had heard belowstairs, what she believed to be his and the vessel's peril.

For a long time he said nothing. Then his answer came gravely, devoid of emotion.

"It is quite possible that you have jumped to conclusions, Miss Kenwood. Men talk extravagantly at times with but little evil intent. However, I'll look into it, I assure you. If, on the merest chance, what you say is true, you will have saved the ship many times the cost of your passage."

His words had the effect of a cold shower. For the moment, so carried away was she with the vital import of her message, she had forgotten that monetary considerations stood between them. She drew herself up firmly. "Don't worry about me. I will pay all I owe you and your company eventually, one way or another. I've learned more than one thing in your galley."

His lips twitched. "As you will. Meanwhile, if there is anything you need you'll find Mrs. Swenson helpful, I'm sure."

He touched his cap. The interview

was at an end, leaving Rosalie with an inexplicable sense of bafflement.

"I'VE come to give myself up to you." It was the night before the Tehuantepec was due to dock in San Diego. Rosalie, a rigid little figure with a dead-white face and quivering mouth, stood in Captain Spicer's office.

In the intervening days, under the motherly eyes of Mrs. Swenson, she had kept much to herself. In the first deck cabin to which the captain had assigned her she had feared the other passengers, their prying eyes, their gossiping tongues. Her clothes, despite Julio's expert ministrations, felt tawdry and shabby, as did her soul.

Books, fruit and candy had been constantly in her room, but on the one or two occasions when she had met Captain Spicer, he had passed her with a brief nod or a few coldly courteous syllables, an odd look in his eyes that made her feel queer and uncomfortable.

As she faced him her cheeks stung with the recollection of it. She had but one ambition in life, she told herself; to pay him back what she owed him and tell him how much she hated him.

"Be seated, won't you?" The captain's knuckles shone white on the arm of his chair.

Rosalie drew a long breath. "I'm afraid not," she answered evenly. "I just wanted to be sure you didn't misunderstand my position. I don't want any thanks for what I told you about the ship. I—don't you see—I would have done as much for any one." She flung out her hands. "Any one, I tell you! I—oh, believe it or not, I *want* to go to jail in San Diego. I couldn't be any unhappier than I am here, this way, with you."

"My dear girl!" The captain rose to his feet. He hesitated; then his voice came deep and resonant. "Don't you know you've done more for me than I can ever hope to make up to you?"

"Well, you've got a queer way of showing it." A lump stuck in Rosalie's throat.

"But I thought you understood; that the rest could wait."

"You—you would!" She turned her head. He should not see the fierce exultation that, like mercury in a thermometer, had risen within her. "Tell me what became of Miguel," she demanded.

A puzzled frown puckered his forehead. In one swift stride he was beside her, bending over her. "Rosalie, I guess I'm a blunderer, but I didn't dare, for your sake—you do see, don't you?—to give an inch. I wanted it so that not a breath—"

"But you haven't told me what I asked you about Miguel." She eyed the toe of her slipper stubbornly. It seemed very small and pointed and a long way off. Quite suddenly she realized that their positions had reversed, that he was pleading and she was being obdurate—temporarily.

The captain dropped his hands to his sides.

"Your little friend went on duty in the second cabin several days ago. He was just shaken up a bit. He's Julio's cousin. That's how I found out that day that you were in the galley."

A line of pain threaded itself across his face.

"Johnson has been reprimanded and will be relieved of his post at San Francisco. I was inhuman, a monster, Rosalie"—his voice broke—"but I was fighting it from the beginning, from the moment I ran across you, curled up there like a frightened child by the smokestack. I wanted to put you

out of my sight. I knew I *had* to keep you there."

"But I said I hoped your ship would break in two and that every man would be saved but you." Rosalie dared not look up, dared not show the joy that was sweeping over her.

"Every man is lost to you but me from now on, you adorable little tease." Roughly he gathered her to him, forced her eyes upward. In his own was the softness she had dreamed of, and his chin was trembling. "And when we reach San Diego to-morrow I'm going to prove it."

"That's where you're going to have me locked up, isn't it?"

"Yes, if that's what you want to call it, but I'm going to be the jailer."

"Oh!" With her cheek against his, Rosalie Kenwood smiled blissfully. She was back in Court Street again sitting in the movies. Again by a moon-pathed sea, all atilt with cross-legged palms, she was listening to the pleadings of the perfect lover, a lover whose arms—

"My dearest," she whispered at length, snuggling deeper, closer, "this is so much, so very much, better."

Love's Call

WHILE I walked the shadows
Of the Courts of Doubt,
From beyond the high wall,
From the world without,
Came a voice of magic
That my dreamings knew,
And my sad heart whispered,
"Love is calling you!"

With my willow whistle
And my crust of bread
I crept through the gray courts,
As the pale ghosts fled,
But, when I would clamber
Out to meet her call,
Love smiled through the shadows—
And there was no wall!

—Edgar Daniel Kramer

Alone in the Crowd

"The road to my heart is along the Great White Way!" Words that meant bitter gain and aching loss!

Then the little court jester was in the arms of the big sourdough

By Leta Zoe Adams

"SPEED up, girls, or we'll miss that boat yet."

A chorus of assurances answered Nell, the leader of the Melody Maids, as suitcases slammed shut and hats were pulled hurriedly over bobbed curls.

Chloe Shelly wasn't taking part in the upheaval going on in the hotel room. She stood by the window and looked out at the great Alaskan mountains, snow-crowned, which rose so close behind the little city.

Her wide blue eyes were close to tears and she kept biting at her coral underlip to steady it.

Nell deposited her suitcase at the door, yanked on a glove and came over to Chloe. In her eyes was sympathy.

"Gee, Chloe, you don't know how I hate to leave you stranded up here like this." She paused to pull on another glove. "If we only had enough money to stake you to fare back to the States you know we'd do it, don't you?"

"It's just my hard luck—that I haven't the fare back," Chloe stated in

her silky Southern drawl, looking away from Nell's sympathetic glance.

"I know. The rest of us had more money to start with than you did. I shouldn't have let you come on such a shoe-string. I feel responsible, but I don't know what to do about it—now."

"There's nothing to do about it," Chloe said.

"You've enough to last you for a few days, haven't you? And I'm sure you can get something to do here. They say a girl can always get a job in Alaska."

"I'll get on all right." Chloe managed a brave smile which, however, wasn't quite convincing. "Don't any of you worry about me."

"It's a shame," Nell repeated. Then she shrugged with the hardened nonchalance of the veteran trouper she was. "Oh, well, it's all in the game. We thought we could tour these Alaskan towns and make the lonesome sourdoughs cough up a lot of that famous gold dust of theirs just to hear the Melody Maids make jazz, but we found that they've all got radios and tune in on the national hook-up every night. We should have turned back at Wrangell when we saw what flops we were. Then we'd have been able to stake you to fare. But away up here . . ."

"There goes the ten-minute whistle!" one of the girls cried out in sudden alarm. "If we don't push off in five jiffs . . ."

The four girls crowded toward the door.

"Good-by, Chloe, old dear! We'll write to you in care of this hotel and you be sure to answer and tell us all about . . ."

"Good-by!"

"Good-by!"

They were gone. Chloe could hear their quick, light footsteps receding down the hall, down the stairs.

THE tears she had held back so long coursed, unbidden, down her cheeks. Angrily she wiped them away.

"I won't cry. I won't. What good will crying do?"

What good indeed when a girl is stranded in a little town in southwestern Alaska with less than a week's room rent in her purse and no means of getting any more?

But the tears continued nevertheless. Through them Chloe could see only mistily the banjo which lay on a chair, open as though ready to use. Before, when the world went wrong, she had always picked up her banjo and made its metallic strings throb with the pain in her heart. That had always helped.

She made a step toward the chair, then as the sharp blast of a boat whistle cut the air and echoed back from the mountains, she halted, caught at a green velveteen jacket hanging over the foot of the bed and ran to the door.

A little later she was walking along an evergreen-shaded path where the gargoyle faces of totem poles grinned down at her.

She walked rapidly, head up, hands thrust into the pockets of her jacket. She couldn't cry! If she allowed herself to she'd just crumple up!

But after a little, although she still walked fast, the mistiness of her eyes blotted out the cool arcade of the path. That was the reason she didn't see the young man coming toward her, the reason she all but bumped into him.

"Beg pardon," she mumbled.

She couldn't see his face very well, either, and she was so confused that,

in brushing past him, she dropped her handkerchief with her compact wrapped up in it. And of course the compact *would* open and the miniature powder puff and even more miniature rouge pat go tumbling out.

The young man was already picking up the pieces when she turned back.

"I'm so sorry." Her voice had a slight tremor in it.

"If I hadn't actually seen you," he was saying as he handed her the articles, "I'd have sworn these belonged to some fairy queen."

He was grinning pleasantly and Chloe saw now that he was quite the nicest-looking young man she had seen for—well, for a long, long time. It wasn't that he was so handsome, although he might be called that, too, with his twinkling hazel eyes and outdoor-bronzed skin. It was a certain radiance of good health and good nature.

"I'm far from a fairy queen," she answered him with readier wit than she would have thought herself capable of a minute before. "At least I haven't any magic wand!"

The young man studied with warm admiration Chloe's lovely cinnamon-brown hair curling about her creamy neck in a long bob; her flushed, troubled face with the wide blue eyes.

"Why, you're one of the Melody Maids! I was at the concert last night. You're the little banjoist! But didn't I see the others going down to the dock to take the boat just a while ago?" He grinned again. "Did you like us so well that you didn't want to leave?"

Chloe's lips twisted ironically. "I —couldn't leave," she said simply. "I hadn't the money."

"Say—that's tough!"

He seemed to be genuinely disturbed about the trouble of this girl whom he had met only a moment before. Chloe wondered if all Alaskans were like that.

He continued after a moment's silence: "I suppose you've already made some plans—found work of some kind, I mean?"

"Will the grizzly bears hire a banjoist? Or the Indians?" she asked.

His grin broke through again. "I have an idea fate had a hand in throwing us together like this to-day, do you know it?"

"Meaning what?" Chloe asked curiously.

"Just this," he stated. "Here I brought mother over from the island on purpose yesterday to see if we could find some one to help her with the work and I run smack into a girl who needs work. Isn't that fate?"

"What—kind of work?" faltered Chloe.

"Some cooking—and all that sort of thing. Mother has been ailing for months now and the work—even what little housework there is to do—is getting too much for her. I've been helping her all I can, but with all my other jobs I'm not much force. Would you consider such a thing?"

Consider cooking for this young man and his mother on a lonely island! Chloe felt herself recoiling from it—yet, logic told her, it was certainly worth thinking about when the end of her tether was so near.

"I can cook quite well, but I don't know whether I'd want to do that—or not," she said hesitantly.

"Don't try to decide now. Let me take you over to talk to mother. She's staying with a friend to-day while I nose around town. She can give you all the dope better than I can. Will you do that?"

Feeling much like a swimmer taking

a dive off a springboard Chloe gave her assent.

AS they made their way along, the young man told Chloe that his name was Dick McGirr and that the "Island" he spoke of was Spruce Island, some miles up the Sound. It was a silver fox farm and he and his mother owned it.

Chloe in her turn told him something of her history. She told him how she had been raised on a remote cotton plantation learning from the darkies how to make a banjo talk. How her parents had died leaving her little more than good will. How she had packed her banjo under her arm and stormed New York's gates, falling in with Nell and her Melody Maids. Something of their gay plans for the Alaskan tour, and its ignominious finish that very day.

But of her loneliness on the plantation and her desire to be where there were people and crowds she said nothing at all, because she could see that this was no time for anything lying so close to one's heart.

Mrs. McGirr was a frail-looking woman with twinkling eyes like Dick's. She talked to Chloe a long time about Spruce Island and her needs.

"Perhaps you could train one of the Indian girls to help you," she said. "I just haven't the strength to teach them because they must be watched so closely."

Chloe couldn't help warming to the friendly McGirrs. But a cook! Still, what was wrong about being a cook?

"Yes," she said at last. "I'll do it —for a while."

She meant, of course, that she'd do it until she'd earned enough to return to the States.

Dick made no attempt to hide his elation. He beamed at Chloe.

"Gosh, I'm tickled you're coming with us. I was afraid you'd back out. It's almost too good to be true."

That evening the three of them boarded Dick's little launch and went sputtering away through the quiet green-blue waters. Three hours later they drew up at a heavily timbered island and trouped up to a house of peeled spruce logs which rambled picturesquely about a clearing.

And later, in the room assigned to her, Chloe looked about at the polar-bear skin rug on the floor and the Indian blanket hangings and an odd little smile twisted her soft-curved lips.

Had she fled from the plantation only to come to a place ten times more lonely!

She heard Dick whistling and peeped out the window to see him striding away to a row of kennels where a dozen dogs were barking him a welcome.

"Maybe," mused Chloe as she watched, "it won't be so hard. It might even be a sort of lark since it's only temporary anyhow."

It was in that spirit that she went at the work she was hired to do. There was the house to take care of and meals to cook for the three of them and one hired hand.

She found a bright Indian girl whom she began to train to keep house the white man's way, but even then there was a great deal of time in between. And in those hours Chloe, dressed in overalls and gingham blouse, often accompanied Dick on his rounds looking after the foxes.

There were other hours, too, when, followed by the string of malemutes which made up Dick's dog team in winter, she trailed about on exploring trips of her own.

During those times she would often

stand on some rocky promontory and shade her eyes to look out over the water. Beyond the horizon—a long, long way—were tall spires and people hurrying to and fro. How soon would she have enough money to ride over that horizon and join those throngs?

When the evenings were cool they all sat before a cozy fire in the big cobblestone fireplace while Chloe strummed out harmonies on her banjo and Dick sang in his really fine baritone. When it was balmy outside Chloe and Dick sat on the porch or took the rowboat and went drifting along the darkling shores of the island beneath the silvery stars.

IT was one of those nights. Chloe had been at the island for two months or more. They had been out on the water, absorbing moonlight, and had just come in. Dick was helping Chloe to the little dock. Her foot slipped on a wet board and the next moment she found herself strained close in Dick's arms, as though he would never let her go.

"I love you!" He tilted back her head in order to see more clearly into her face and poured into her eyes all the love in his heart. "I love you, little Chloe. I love you so!"

For a moment everything swam before Chloe, for it seemed to her that this was what she had been wanting—waiting for all these weeks—to see his ardent eyes looking into hers like that!

Her arms tightened about him as his lips bent to meet hers in the first sweet kiss of love. But just as his lips touched hers she jerked her head aside and tore herself from his arms.

"No—no! You mustn't."

Stupefied by the sudden change in her Dick let his arms drop to his sides. He was humble, apologetic. "Chloe, I startled you! But I couldn't help it, honestly. When you stumbled I caught you and I couldn't seem to let you go! But you know now that I do love you, Chloe. I've loved you from the first when I saw you in 'Lover's Lane.'"

"I know, I know!" Chloe's eyes were troubled pools. It couldn't be she loved Dick McGirr. It couldn't possibly be. He didn't belong to her life. He belonged to the silent, lonely places and she belonged to the busy marts! A chasm as deep as eternity yawned between them.

"You've seemed so happy and contented these last months! Chloe, I've watched. Couldn't you stay here with me? We could be married—can't you see how wonderful it would be—just you and me on our little island?"

At Chloe's gesture of protest he went on eagerly: "The winters aren't bad here, really they're not. People think because it's Alaska that it must be like the arctics, but here on the water it's no more severe than the New York climate. In a few years when I get the farm going well if we wanted to we could sell out and go somewhere in the States—anywhere you wanted to go. Chloe . . ."

His voice went on, almost hypnotically. He painted the coziness of a Spruce Island winter, of the good times they could have together.

Chloe felt herself being swayed overpoweringly, while all the time something within her kept crying: "You couldn't do it! You know you couldn't. You'd *die* of loneliness. You ran away from such a place once!"

And suddenly she put out a hand to stop the swift flow of his eager words.

"Dick!" She spoke sharply. "Listen to me a minute. You must. Please."

He stopped speaking, his eyes questioning.

Chloe tried to keep her voice steady. It wasn't going to be easy.

"Dick, did you ever feel that you wanted to be where bands were playing and newsboys were crying their extras and people were thronging the streets?" She paused a minute, but as he didn't answer went on wistfully: "I did. I do. Down on the plantation it was horribly lonely. No one my own age to play with. Just a shut-in little world. That was the main reason I learned to play the banjo, because I thought that some day when I was old enough I'd leave the plantation and go where there were people and things happening. Then—when father died—I went. There was just a year of it—until now. And it wasn't enough! It wasn't even a start! Oh, don't you see? Love isn't enough to blot out the memory of that awful loneliness!"

"Then—you—do—love—me?"

"I don't know, Dick. For a minute I thought—perhaps I did. Then I saw it couldn't possibly be so, because I want so much to get back to the cities . . ."

He was nice! Even through the threatened tears Chloe saw that, as his brown eyes looked into hers

"Then it isn't love, Chloe." His voice was unnaturally flat. "Love would sweep everything before it . . . you wouldn't care . . ."

"How do you know?"

"It would sweep you as it has me. You'd wonder why you ever thought you could be happy in the cities without me, just as I am wondering how I can be happy without you—here."

"But Dick, you don't understand . . ." Chloe's voice rose shrilly

with the desperateness of her desire to clarify the whole complicated business in her own mind as well as Dick's. "It's something older and deeper—than you. It's more a part of me. I've grown up fighting loneliness. It's terrible. You don't know. It's the worst kind of pain! I can't risk it—again! I'd be mad to do it!"

In the wan light Chloe felt his eyes, hopeless, sad, upon her. His voice drifted to her like a mist.

"I had no idea until to-night that the only road to your heart was along the Great White Way. But since it is . . . well . . . that's all, I suppose, Chloe."

IT seemed to Chloe that in that moment the island closed in on her, smothering her; that the sky drew nearer, listening. Back of the house she heard the half-wolf malemutes howling at the moon in their wild way, and she heard the water slapping softly at her feet.

She wanted to throw herself against Dick's breast and sob out her heart. She wanted to tell him that she loved him more than she feared loneliness, but she was held to the spot by some invisible wall which had grown up between them.

She turned away instead and walked rapidly up to the house.

Behind her she heard Dick's footsteps dragging.

He didn't follow her in. She went to her room and lit the lamp with trembling fingers. Her face in the mirror was gaunt and white as chalk.

To a casual observer in the days which followed Dick and Chloe were the same light-hearted companions, tramping the island together, laughing over the antics of the malemutes, but each knew that it wasn't the same. There was a sense of strain in the air—the expectancy which precedes a thunder shower.

It was about a week after the scene on the dock that Dick went down the Sound to get supplies at the town and came back with an air mail letter for Chloe from Nell.

Chloe had heard once before from Nell, and had written her present whereabouts. As soon as Dick gave her the letter she ducked into her room to read it.

She hugged it a little first. News from outside! Exultantly she ripped it open.

> Chloe, you poor darling. The grandest thing has happened! You won't be able to believe it! We're slated for the Big Time. Did you ever hear of such colossal luck? We're in Chicago now, as you see, getting ready to start trouping. Now listen, darling, we've got to have you because you're the best 'lil girl banjoist in the world. We'll wait here till you come, but you've got to put wings on those feet of yours, honey, 'cause our practice time is limited.
>
> Just turn your eyes on the fat check I'm inclosing for your fare and expenses and jump on the first crate going south. Now for goodness sake hurry up.
>
> Yours for a rosy future,
>
> NELL.

Chloe looked long at the check which tumbled out. Her fare back to civilization! Her ticket to the bright lights, to the street where no one is lonely!

Plans began to seethe in her head. The Indian girl was competent to handle the work now. Dear Mrs. McGirr would be all right. And as for Dick—her mind stopped there. That was finished.

When she had gone—when she was back with the crowds—with Nell and

the girls—she'd forget the ecstasy of that moment in his arms. She'd forget his eyes and his bronzed face and the wide, compact shoulders of him. She'd be *glad* she hadn't yielded to his ardent picturing of their life together on—lonely Spruce Island.

Still it hurt a lot to tell Dick she was leaving. He tried to be jovial.

"Looks like you've found the pot of gold at the foot of the rainbow, sure enough!"

But Chloe felt that his bravado was only a screen for despair.

Five days later she sailed. Dick took her to the boat. He even wrung her hand and said huskily:

"I hope you have a lot of success, Chloe. I hope you're happy."

"Thanks, Dick."

She found she could say no more. Without looking at him she wrenched her hand free and ran up the gangplank and into her stateroom.

When the boat whistled she crept out to stand at the rail and watch the dock recede. If she called to him—now . . .

Her eyes turned to the mountains, dark and foreboding. She shivered. No! It was too terribly lonely . . .

When she arrived in Seattle she took the first train East. At the station in Chicago, Nell and the girls swooped down upon her.

"You're looking like a million! Must have found a pocket of that ol' gold somewhere up there!" Nell teased.

Going uptown in the crowded taxi, they outlined the plans for their new act on the Big Time.

"And if it doesn't spell 'Success' with a capital 'S,' then I don't know my sharps and flats," Nell commented confidently.

Chloe said: "It sounds peachy!" and drank in great hungry drafts of the towering buildings and the cluttered sidewalks sweeping by. *Her* world!

TWO years! Two years of strumming out melody behind footlights. Two years of boarding sooty trains in crowded stations and parking hurriedly in hotel rooms. A jostling, exciting hectic two years with hardly time to think.

The Melody Maids had just arrived in San Francisco for a week's run, and had taken the usual hotel suite. In the sitting room between the bedrooms all the girls except Nell were lounging about in pyjama suits. Without their stage make-up they looked a little jaded.

Nell suddenly burst into the room.

"What do you think? We're all invited to a big party with the Sanford Boys after the show to-night! Isn't that great? They'll take us down the beach to some swanky place, you can bet your last dollar on that."

There was a chorus of delighted responses, except from Chloe. She sat in a deep chair by the window and said nothing at all. Parties. Parties. More parties. People stepping on your feet on two-by-four floors. What was the matter with her anyhow? She tried to think how long she'd felt this way, but she couldn't remember. It had been a long time, although until now she'd kept it pretty well hidden from the girls.

Nell came across to her. "Shoot the works, Chloe. Something's on the mind. You can't fool an old-timer. Got the blues?"

Was that what this feeling was—merely the blues? Chloe nodded. "I suppose so. It all seems so—futile."

"Futile!"

"What's futile? Our work? Trouping on the Big Time?"

The girls came to life in combative protest.

"All this noise and confusion. Jumping about the country like kangaroos. Never lighting anywhere long enough to set your house in order."

"But that's the fun of it!" some one argued. "Meeting new people every day. Having all sorts of funny experiences knocking around."

"I know. I used to like it. But... oh, I can't explain my feelings."

"She's in love!" some one else decided. "That's exactly it! She's just wearing her heart out for some sheik who's been making goggly eyes at her from the front row!"

Chloe looked up quickly. "Love?" she queried. "Love?"

Was that the meaning of this strange, incomplete feeling? No, it was the same feeling she used to have on the plantation. Loneliness. But she was in the midst of things now. Faces fairly swarmed about her. How could she possibly be lonely?

"Here, you girls, don't kid Chloe so much!" Nell took up the conversation. She turned to Chloe and tossed a program into her lap. "Here's something more important to occupy idle minds. We're the second feature in this he-man's town this year, it seems. Can you tie that?"

The girls gave a concerted gasp of amazement and horror. "But last year we were the main feature!"

"What's the big idea, anyhow?"

"Who's stole our stuff?"

The girls swarmed about Chloe while she turned the pages of the program until she came to the middle.

"'Makluk and his Malemutes,'" they read in chorus.

Nell attempted to explain. "I tried to find out, but I couldn't get any satisfaction from any one about it. 'It's the best-drawing act we've got on the bill,' was all they'd say. It certainly grinds you down, doesn't it?"

All except Chloe agreed that it did. She sat staring at the program.

She heard faintly somewhere: "Alaska seems to be our Jonah."

And suddenly, for no reason at all that the girls could see, Chloe buried her face on the broad arm of the chair and cried.

THE Melody Maids were to come on right after the Malemute act.

The five girls stood in the wings in their snappy costumes—Chloe's a court jester's garb with tiny tinkling bells on the saucy cap and again at wrists and ankles.

A dog sled with its tugging, straining dogs came on the stage from the opposite wings, a man almost buried in hooded fur parka swinging at the handle bars and cracking his long whip over the heads of the dogs, shouting, "Mush! Mush! You Malemutes!"

The act represented an episode in the All-Alaska Sweepstakes which are staged at Nome every winter. As the dog sled swept across the stage, Chloe gave a cry. Nell, standing near by, caught at her arm almost roughly.

"What ails you to-night, Chloe? Do you want to bring the manager in here?"

"He . . ." Chloe choked. "He—it's Dick!"

But the name meant nothing to Nell. "Dick who?" she questioned disinterestedly.

Chloe didn't answer. Her eyes were literally glued to the man swinging at the handle bars of the sled. It wasn't possible. Dick *here!* Yet there was no doubt of it. There weren't *two* men in the world who looked like that!

The act was taking swift form be-

fore the eyes of the audience. A faked blizzard covered the stage, sending the malemutes to their haunches. The whip cracked over them menacingly, not, however, touching them. The voice of the driver shouted more and more threateningly. Then, at the very height of the storm, the towline broke. Things happened so fast then that even the quickest eye could scarcely follow.

The lead dog, a great fellow, turned upon his mates with a snarl like a wolf, and they all went down in a tangle of squirming dog flesh. Then the driver leaped among them, shouting. The great leader made a lunge straight for his throat, bearing him down . . .

There was a scream from the wings and a small figure in ridiculous tights with jingling bells shot into the center of the mêlée.

"Dick! I'm coming to help! Dick! Don't let him . . ."

The curtain rang down hastily.

The stage immediately swarmed with people. As though at a signal the dogs quieted down and trotted into the wings.

In the driver's arms Chloe's body shook with sobs.

"He would have k-killed you, Dick! He jumped right at your th-throat. . ."

From the depths of the parka Dick McGirr looked down at the small, terror-stricken figure in his arms and grinned.

"It was the act, Chloe. They do it at every performance . . ."

"Clear the stage, you two!" It was the gruff voice of the manager bawling authoritatively.

Still holding to each other they moved into the wings.

Behind the shelter of a great painted tree Dick took both Chloe's hands and held them tightly in his own, drinking in her features with hungry eyes.

"I couldn't stay up there without you any longer, Chloe. I rented the farm and sent mother to my aunt's in San Diego. Then I got the idea of going on the circuit with the pups."

"You're not going back to Spruce Island, then? You're going to be a trouper—always?"

He searched her eyes. "You know you said that the road to your heart was along the Great White Way. I don't care whether I go back to Spruce Island or trek the world like this—just so you'll come with me! You see," he added, "I thought maybe if I came galloping up the Great White Way to your door—you'd come . . ."

"Oh, Dick!" Chloe tried to keep her voice from breaking over the dear word. "I've been so lonely!"

"In the cities? Trouping with the girls?"

"Dick," Chloe straightened her slender figure and looked him directly in the eyes. "You can be lonely in a crowd—if the one you love isn't there. Don't you know that? I've learned it—these past two years . . . and I don't care where I am just so I'm with you, Dick. Even—even lonely Spruce Island would be plenty populated if it contained—you."

"Sweetheart!"

The king's jester was all but buried in the fur parka of the big sourdough as their lips met and clung in the kiss which had been postponed for two whole years.

The show went on, as shows must do, but the place of the little banjoist was vacant and the next week there was a new girl banjoist in the Melody Maids' Orchestra, and the old one was standing on a boat deck beside a stalwart young man who looked down at her adoringly and whispered:

"My bride!"

"I want to have a love affair of my own with you, dear"

The Girl Who Wanted Everything

Bill wove his dreams into a bridal gown. But only the right girl could don it

By Sara Shattuck

"LYDIA TRACY, I'm getting darn tired of this!"

Lydia, humming as she swung back and forth on the vine-covered porch, glanced idly up at the tall boy who spoke. His hair, damp with the heat, formed short, crisp curls close to his sunburned forehead, as his blue eyes met hers, angry, baffled.

"Lydia's Bill," the crowd called him, in token of the bond that had

chained him to her since, a small, golden-haired minx, she had captured the heart of the boy next door with her exquisiteness, her adorable helplessness.

To-day, Lydia's Bill wasn't his usual easy-going self.

"What do you mean?" Lydia queried innocently, big violet eyes lifted to his. Her golden hair and pink and white skin made her seem still scarcely more than a child, an effect that was enhanced by dimples, and the delicate slenderness of her body. Lydia was acknowledged to be the prettiest girl in Millvale. No wonder Bill loved her—and found loving her a torment!

"I mean that I'm getting darn sick of seeing you go out with other fellows! I want you to be *my* girl—mine alone. Oh, Lydia, I wish you'd marry me!" The last was wrung from him almost involuntarily, as his lips longed for the cool curve of her cheek.

"Maybe I will—some day!" smiled Lydia, gently swinging.

"That's no answer!" Bill groaned. "All I am to you, Lydia, is second fiddle in the orchestra! I just fill in when no one else happens to turn up!"

The foot pushing the swing came to the floor in a sharp little stamp. "How dare you talk to me like that!" she cried.

"Well, it's true!" Bill was white-lipped, visibly miserable. "You got mad at Don Tucker, and for a week you went with me. Jack Colbert asked Amy to the big dance instead of you, and you called me up and let me take you. I'm not blind! And now you break a date with me to go to the Saturday night dance with John Deener, a ham actor you'll probably never see again after he leaves here!"

Lydia could hardly credit her ears. Bill Decker, talking to her like this! Bill, who usually agreed with her family and friends in considering her nearly perfect, making her out a selfish creature, using him for her own ends! Lydia fell back on tears.

"Why, I don't see how you can stand there and say such things!" she cried, violet eyes dewy wet, soft lips trembling. "I'm sorry I asked you to take me to the dance, if that's the way you feel about it! But I've always felt that I could call on you when I wanted to go some place, or needed some one. You always help me out of tight places, Bill, and there's no one else I'd turn to as I do you, with my problems and troubles. You know that!"

Bill found his anger melting before the tremulous red lips. But he stuck stubbornly to his guns, as he stood scuffing his foot against the screen door. "I want to help you out of mix-ups, Lydia. I don't even mind being second choice, because in this case it's a lot better than nothing. But, darlin', can't I be more than understudy once in a while? Can't I have an affair of my own with you, Lyddie?"

There was something about the big, clumsy boyishness of him that thrilled Lydia, suddenly and unexpectedly. Why, she'd never thought of him as having feelings, as being hurt by her treatment! He always seemed so good-natured, so ready to come or go as she wished. If only he hadn't called her "Lyddie," all might have been different.

Lydia hated her nickname. She and Bill had often quarreled over it when she, just beginning to tuck her hair up and use her mother's rouge and powder on the quiet, wanted the world to recognize that she was a young lady. Bill would stand in his yard and call "Lyddie! Lyddie!" as she passed, with haughty disdain, down the street. And he still slipped once in a while.

"Bill Decker, I've heard just about enough of your sermons for one afternoon!" she said, rising with a swirl of soft pink organdie. "I'll see you again when you feel more civilized — maybe!"

The door to the house banged behind her.

BILL, left alone on the empty porch, experienced a sinking sensation. He'd never really quarreled with Lydia before, not so it left him feeling sick and miserable. He hadn't improved his status by his demands, had only lost what ground he had gained in Lydia's heart. With a sigh he walked down the front steps and climbed into "General Joe," his battered car.

Bill wasn't entirely selfish in wishing Lydia wouldn't go to the Saturday dance with John Deener. He didn't like the dapper actor's looks. Lydia didn't know that she was playing with a dangerous new toy when she encouraged his bantering, sleepy-eyed attentions.

Bill stopped the car in front of Amusement Hall. The play "Rosalind" had come to Millvale "direct from New York" for a week's engagement, bringing John Deener with it. And now, ironically enough, the company's electrician had quit, and Bill had been called in to take his place.

Bill wasn't a regular stage electrician, but he always managed the lighting for school plays and church benefits, and so they had called him in. He loved pottering with lights and trying out new stage effects, and he planned to spend the first week of his vacation managing the lights for "Rosalind."

The theater was cool and damp inside, with a musty back-stage odor. The stage itself was heaped with crated sets and furnishings, and an amazing number of "spots" and "floods." Bill, sleeves rolled up, was soon hard at work, his troubles momentarily forgotten in the thrill of finding out what each and every light was for.

He was aroused from his absorbed study by a cool voice saying, "How many times must I ask you to put a new light in my dressing room?"

Bill spun around on his heel to face a small, slim girl, smartly dressed, with a tip-tilted nose and large brown eyes. Her face was a pale oval, except for her mouth, which was beautiful in shape, and painted a defiant, audacious red. Something about her utter, amused assurance and the Boston accent she used annoyed Bill, still smarting from Lydia's treatment.

"How many times have you asked me already?" he drawled.

"Four," the young lady replied curtly.

"Then do it again and see if you can't attach a 'please' to it," he said, turning back to his work.

"Do you realize that you're talking to Marda Morrell?" a voice — minus the Boston accent—asked witheringly.

"Well, you're interrupting Bill Decker, if it's of any interest to you," he replied nonchalantly.

There was a little silence, then a low, amused chuckle. Bill glanced over his shoulder to see that the girl was laughing, her brown eyes dancing. "I guess we'll call it an introduction," she said, holding out a small, tanned hand. "And will you be so kind as *please* to put a new light in my dressing room *when* you get time?"

Bill grinned back. "Sure. I'm new here, so I'll have to ask some one where they keep them. Changing a globe is quite a job—I'll give it my personal attention."

"Thank you so much," she said, ignoring his thrust. She walked quickly down the damp aisle to the dressing rooms.

One of the stage hands helped Bill locate a globe, and Bill asked him, "Where is this Miss Morrell's room?"

"Number one. With the star on it. She's the leading lady."

"Whew!" whistled Bill. "And I was just handing her the raspberry, too!"

"Gee, you must be green, not to know who Marda Morrell is. She just hit the big town a couple of years ago, and she's all slated to have a show of her own next fall. She just happened to understudy Illa Harmon and got a chance to go on when Illa sprained her ankle. They say Illa's crazy jealous of the kid—made the producer shunt her out into the sticks because every one went wild over her. You should see Marda dance! She makes a butterfly seem heavy by comparison."

It was a rather shamefaced young man who found his way to the starred dressing room. Marda was having her hair dressed, and gave him only a preoccupied nod. She was exotic in a yellow Chinese kimono, over which her hair fell in dark waves.

The lights were "in series," and Bill had to experiment to find which one was responsible for turning them all off. His eyes met Marda's brown ones in the mirror, and she smiled at him. And presently they were talking and laughing, just as though they had always been friends.

Bill found the burned-out light, replaced it, and started to go when she suddenly detained him with a little gesture. "We're going to be here for a week," the star said hesitatingly, "and I don't know a soul. You're—part of the town, I take it, and I've been wondering if you would take pity on me and introduce me to a few people. I'm lonely at times, you know I came from a small town myself, and I miss the friendliness of it."

Bill could hardly credit his ears. "You mean—you'll let me take you out?" he stammered.

"I mean, I'm *asking* you to take me some place—any place—to-night," was her astounding answer.

"But I'm just—I just work here," Bill floundered. "And, besides—" He was about to say that he was engaged to Lydia, which was considerably stretching the truth, when the girl interrupted.

"Don't be silly," she drawled, smiling. "I'm dying of boredom, and I'm used to having my own way. I'll meet you right here after the play, and I'll expect you to take me somewhere to dance!"

Bill went back to his work, wondering worriedly what Lydia would think when he took Marda to the dance. A moment's panic assailed him, but he set his jaw firmly when he remembered that Lyddie was going to the selfsame dance with sleek Jack Deener. She couldn't care so very much what he did, he reminded himself rather grimly.

WHEN Bill walked into the dance hall with Marda Morrell, he created a sensation. In the first place, no one had ever known him to look at any girl but Lydia Tracy. He was generally regarded as Lydia's property even by those who might have liked to have his adoring glances for themselves. And here he was with an actress—the decidedly pretty and successful leading lady in a revue! You could never tell about silent men, startled glances seemed to

flash to each other when his friends saw him.

Bill enjoyed creating a sensation. It was time people—Lydia included—realized that he wasn't just a door mat for Lydia's little feet. He was tired—darn tired—of the way every one looked at him as though they were a little sorry for him; tired of having fellows slap him on the back and murmur, "Too bad, old man," when Lydia cut his dances and left him in the lurch.

Being human, he enjoyed dancing with Marda. She was as light on her feet as a shadow, and followed his steps like one. She could talk about several things besides Marda Morrell. She was sort of glowing. Her dress was of smooth, dull red, her small slippers red, and somehow before her simplicity all the other girls seemed countrified. Best of all, she liked Bill, and didn't go off and leave him the minute another man asked her to.

He could see that Lydia wasn't having such a good time as usual. For one thing, she was used to being the most popular, the most sought-after girl at the dance, and to-night she was suffering a temporary eclipse as the stags flocked around Marda. Watching his chance, he cut in on Lydia, his heart fairly humming as he drew her slender body into the sheltering curve of his arm. But being Bill, and knowing nothing about girls, he immediately said the wrong thing. "Honey," he asked anxiously, "you aren't mad because I brought Marda to the dance, are you? I wouldn't want to hurt you, dear—"

Bill saw them together, but he wasn't going to give in. It was time Lydia learned a lesson

Her violet eyes were as cold as some times they were warm and dancing, and her red mouth curved scornfully, giving her face a new, hard look Bill had never seen before. "That *is* funny! I wouldn't care, anyway, but it's perfectly obvious that you're just doing it to try and make me jealous, anyhow!"

"I brought her because I like her!"

Bill heard himself say stubbornly, the while he wanted nothing more than to kneel at Lydia's little feet and bury his face in the soft, billowy folds of her dress.

"Well, there's no accounting for tastes," Lydia replied, as some one cut in on them. Soon afterward he saw her leaving the dance hall with John Deener. She was wrapped in a summer evening cloak of soft white fur, a delicate background for the lovely contours of her face, the exquisite color of her pale gold hair. She looked so adorable, like a slightly sulky child, that Bill's heart turned over, and the whole party went stale for him.

ON Monday he had promised to take Marda to the tennis court. As luck would have it, when they arrived, Lydia and John Deener were there before them. Lydia's cheeks were flushed, her hair flying in ringlets from the blue bandeau around her head. In her blue blouse and trim blue shorts, she looked like a small boy. John Deener moved across his side of the net with the stealthy grace of a man dancer.

Just then Lydia caught sight of Bill. "Oh, Bill!" she called, starting toward him. "I've just lost two balls, and we've only this one left. Will you go—" She saw Marda, and stopped short.

"Hi, Marda!" called John Deener, who thought he saw a chance of being on friendlier footing with the leading lady of his play. "How's for joining us—making it doubles?"

"Suits me," Marda drawled, her narrowed eyes almost green as she studied Lydia. She tossed two brilliantly red balls into the court, balls that startlingly matched the red band around her dark hair, her red half socks, and the audacious red curve of her mouth.

Bill, slouching easily around his part of the court, saw that Marda was smooth, relentless in motion, while Lydia was losing her poise as they lost set after set. How he longed to comfort her, to smooth away the rebellious little pucker between her eyes, kiss away the half sullen look on her mouth. Purposely he served Lydia a ball she couldn't possibly miss.

But when she returned it, Marda, like a flash of summer lightning, sent the red ball whizzing back to the other side of the net, scoring a victory in the final set!

Driving Marda back to the town's only hotel, Bill was silent, remembering the hurt, hostile look in Lydia's eyes when they parted.

Abruptly, Marda spoke. "Do you often forget which side you're playing on?" she asked.

"Not often," Bill replied, startled. "But Lydia hates to lose—"

"Somebody has to lose," she reminded him crisply. "It's the chance you take. And if you lose, you can at least know that you played hard!"

That, Bill told himself, was just what he would do after this. He wanted Lydia, and even if he didn't win her, he'd know that he had tried with all his power. He wouldn't cloud the issue by playing around with another girl.

But Lydia didn't give him any chance to put his new resolve into effect. She was always out when he called. And, as luck would have it, he met Marda—bumped into her would be more exact—as she was emerging from the theater on Wednesday.

"Watch out!" he drawled, looking down at her. "Where do you think you're going, anyway?"

The dots on her white dress were the same shade of red as her lips, and her eyes were inscrutable under her large straw hat. He wondered why she always wore red, the color of adventure, of danger?

"I'm going — wherever you're going," she told him.

"You are not!" Bill said, alarmed. Confound the girl, why was she picking on him? "I've had a tennis date for weeks, and I can't break it. I just stopped by to get my racket."

Something in her expression made the palms of his hands prickle and his heart race a little. Her long lashes drooped over her eyes and she said, "It's too awfully hot, isn't it? I think I'll ride to the courts with you and watch. Really, there's something about the way you repulse my advances that intrigues me, Billy!"

Raging inwardly, Bill piloted General Joe down the main street, toward the big white house where the Tracys lived. It wouldn't help him any with Lydia, now he finally had a chance to see her, to drive up with Marda seated beside him! She'd never believe that it wasn't his fault Marda was there.

BUT there was no Lydia, cool and sweet, on the wide front porch. Mrs. Tracy answered his knock and told him that Lydia had gone for the day on a picnic with Jack Deener and some others. "I guess she forgot, if she had a date with you," Mrs. Tracy sympathized. "Goodness, Bill, I wish she'd marry you and settle down! All this chasing around worries me. It doesn't mean a thing, of course, but I'll be glad when she gets tired of it!"

Marda didn't question him when he returned alone and drove savagely out into the country. She just sat quietly, her eyes dreaming over the sweet green fields that lay on either side of them. And somehow, presently, Bill had thrown his arm across the seat back of her, while General Joe sputtered and rattled in protest!

But Marda didn't protest. Her hat was off, and she rested her head against Bill's shoulder, a faint, disturbing perfume in the soft swirls of brown hair, her lashes throwing shadows on the creamy whiteness of her cheeks.

On the way back, Bill stopped the car before an empty house, near the outskirts of Millville. It was a small white house with green shutters, and stood on the crest of a little hill, behind a demure row of hollyhocks. There was something unreal about it, as though it realized it was a dream house, a house to which Bill took Lydia in his imagination, but never in reality. He was afraid she might laugh at him—and he couldn't bear having her laugh at this dream!

Marda walked through the little rooms, her high heels clicking sharply on the bare floors. She peeked into the cupboards and closets, examined the pantry, and looked out at the tangled, old-fashioned garden through the curtainless windows. She was silent and grave, as people should be in dream houses.

Bill lit his pipe, and stood looking with hungry eyes at the living room, which ran the full length of the house, and boasted a fireplace and window seats, besides shelf after shelf for books. He couldn't bear to look at Marda, because he wanted to pretend it was Lydia who stood there. "Some day I'm going to live here," he told Marda, "and raise flowers—and kids."

He heard a soft, rustling sigh beside him. "I hope you do, Bill. And I hope the girl you choose fits in, here."

It was uncanny, the way the girl could say things. That was just why he wanted the house for Lydia, and Lydia for the house. They fitted each other, the bright, unreal little house and Lydia, with her laughter, her make believe. During the ride home, neither he nor Marda spoke.

SATURDAY, the last night of "Rosalind," Bill stood beside the control board in the theater, watching Marda dance. She wore a gorgeous costume of rainbow-hued feathers, and her mouth was sultry in the whiteness of her face. He marvelled at the lightness and grace of her, so sure, so disturbing. The dance ended, and the audience applauded deafeningly.

Bill felt a nudge, and looked up to find the manager standing beside him, studying him from behind an amazingly long cigar. When he spoke, he did so without disturbing the cigar with the motion of his lips.

"We've decided to offer you a regular job with the company," he said without preamble. "You've got ideas, and I wouldn't wonder you'd make good on Broadway, when we get back. Think it over, and let me know to-morrow what you're going to do."

Bill looked after him, his thoughts in a whirl. He had just been offered a chance to work with lights, to try mixing colors, inventing unusual stage effects. The offer was tempting.

Marda swept by him on the way to her dressing room. "Bill, will you run me over to the dance?" she asked abruptly, breathless from her recent exertion. "David was supposed to, but he had to go ahead, and I thought—"

"Sure will, Marda," Bill said quickly. He was again saved the necessity of going alone to the Saturday dance. Lydia was going with John Deener.

Lydia was dancing when they arrived. She seemed almost feverishly gay, laughing up into John Deener's eyes as he led her through the intricate steps of the tango. Bill's heart ached at the sight of her, though she pretended not to see him. The gang he and Lydia went with seemed to be getting a big kick out of his supposed desertion of Lydia in favor of Marda Morrell.

Presently he looked around and realized that Lydia was no longer in the dance hall. Could she be out somewhere with that cad letting him make love to her? The thought made Bill clench his big hands in helpless fury. He must find her. She was so young, in spite of her veneer of sophistication, and she would find Jack Deener different from the boys she was used to going with . . .

"Let's go outside," he suggested to Marda, with whom he was dancing. Going that way, he could make it appear almost accidental, could turn the twosome quite naturally into a party, without making Lydia mad by appearing to be keeping jealous watch over her.

Lydia's trim roadster was not among the cars parked outside of the hall. He and Marda wandered aimlessly down by the Rainbow Creek, enfolded by the tranquillity of the starry night. Marda's cherry red cloak was ghostly silver in the moonlight. The eyes she raised to his were mysterious, enchanting, and her lips— He found, partly because she seemed to expect he would, that he had drawn her pliant body close, and was kissing her.

"Steady!" he warned himself, draw-

ing in a deep breath of the cool night air. For Marda's kisses were like her, thrilling, disturbing.

He didn't move, though. He just stood, crushing her close in his arms. Finally her voice came, mocking, huskily: "Now, I suppose you'll expect me to marry you and live in the dream house and mend your socks and take care of you the rest of your life!"

He released her with savage abruptness. "I do not!" he told her, surprised at his own harshness. "I'm going to marry Lydia Tracy, if she'll have me. Do you think I'd expect that you could be content in the dream house—with me?"

She stood looking at him, her white face a little paler. "Suppose," she whispered huskily, "I thought I could be—content—"

Then she was in his arms again, and Bill was wondering dizzily whether he was engaged to her, and why he was so upset by her kisses, the warm fragrance of her, when it was Lydia he loved—

As though his thought had conjured her, Lydia appeared out of the darkness surrounding them. When she saw him with Marda locked in his arms, she gave a strangled little cry, stood staring at them, incredulous.

Marda recovered first. "John, Lydia!" she called softly. "I'm going to be married! At least, I think he'll have me. Bill has been offered the job of managing the stage lights for 'Rosalind,' and we're going on together—"

There was a stark little silence. Then Lydia ran over to Bill, stood looking up at him with tears glistening in her eyes. "Bill, tell me it isn't true!" she demanded. "Why, you're *mine*—you've been in love with *me*—you can't be going to desert me—"

"Lydia," Bill returned heavily, "you don't care what I do. You've been laughing at my love, trampling it underfoot, for so long that I'm afraid it's pretty nearly dead."

Her small clenched fists were pressing against his chest, her words were frantic. "Bill, I always intended to marry you. You know that. I've always thought you would be waiting for me, when I wanted you!"

"That's where you were mistaken. I told you I was tired of being second choice with you, Lydia." He wished that this scene before these people would end.

Lydia stood looking up at him in the moonlight, a little frightened at the new, grim lines she saw on his determined young face. "Bill," she whispered, "I'll marry you any time you say—I'll be engaged to you, right now, if you want me."

Before he could phrase the question, Marda spoke quickly. There was a hint of laughter—or was it tears?—in her voice, as she said, "That's all right, Bill. I didn't know there were prior claims. I was—only joking, really."

Then, somehow, she and John Deener were gone, and Lydia and he were alone, and Lydia was looking at him with the adoration he had so often sought in vain, while he looked tenderly down at her, and brushed her soft hair with reverent lips.

THE days that followed were busy ones. Bill insisted that they must be married soon, and Lydia, with a new meekness he found adorable, agreed. Now Lydia was sitting beside him on the davenport in the Tracy home, looking like a big French doll in a dress of ruffled blue organdie, her fair curls held in place

by a narrow band of blue velvet. They had discussed plans for the wedding and who the bridesmaids would be.

Suddenly the telephone rang.

Lydia answered it, and putting her hand over the mouthpiece, called to Bill. "Oh, darling, Bud Thornton is back in town and wants to take me over to that new dance hall to-night. Would you—would you mind if I went, just this once?"

"I'm afraid I'd mind very much," Bill told her gravely. "I have plans for this evening which include the girl I'm to marry."

Lydia was disappointed, but she made the best of it, and presently they were in General Joe, heading away from Millvale. He thought Lydia seemed just a little bit sulky, but he thought she would change when she saw the surprise he had prepared for her.

The little house was lit dimly, and looked friendly and inviting in the dusk of evening. Lydia was plainly mystified as he led the way up the flower tangled path, and proudly inserting a key, let his dream girl into the dream house.

He had had his own belongings moved out that day—books, a big chair that stood by the fireplace, his pipe rack in place on the mantel. He turned eagerly toward Lydia, drew her into his arms.

"Honey," he told her, "I've always dreamed of this. And to think that we're going to live here, this is going to be our home—"

Lydia drew back, surprise and anger in her eyes. "Why, we're not!" she flared. "How dared you decide where we're going to live without consulting me? Besides, I've just about coaxed Daddy into giving us that pink stucco in the new sub-division for a wedding present! Lou says that every one who is any one will be living there in a few years—"

Bill was looking at her with wide, startled eyes. "I'm sorry, Lydia, that you don't like it. But I've already paid the first installment, and I guess you'll just have to make the best of it."

"Will I?" Lydia asked icily. "Well, you're just mistaken, Bill Decker. Here I give up a perfectly wonderful date, just to come out and look at a hovel that's miles away from all my friends, and you think you can boss me around, decide everything for me—"

Before Bill could realize what had happened, a small diamond ring was in his hand, and Lydia was gone.

He ran after her, in time to see her hail George Whiting's car, which happened to be passing, and the sound of her laughter reached him as the car disappeared.

He turned toward his dream house, doubly empty now. He could hardly bear to go in, to face it, alone.

Then—he stopped short. For seated in the big chair, slim ankles crossed, was Marda! A new Marda, in a jaunty tweed coat and small red tam: Marda with a soft red mouth untouched by lip-stick, and beseeching brown eyes softly raised to his.

"Bill, let me stay," she whispered, clasped hands stretched toward him. "I want to—awfully. I've been running away from small towns these last few years, but I really like them, really belong in one, doing my own marketing, going to socials in a rattletrap car, raising flowers—and kids! I've known I belonged in one ever since I first saw you. Please—love me, Bill!"

He moved slowly toward her, like a man in a dream. She was utterly lovely,

adorable. "You came back?" he questioned. "You were here—you heard what she—said?"

Marda met his eyes honestly. "I came back to—say good-by to the house. I heard you come up and I just couldn't face your happiness, so I ran and hid—in a closet. And when I heard her I thought—you might be looking for an understudy—"

He had reached the chair, caught her in his arms and buried his head in her lap. "I love you," he told her. "You always seemed so wonderful—so far away. I guess I was crazy, not to see it before. But the house knew. The moment Lydia stepped in here, I knew that something was wrong—that she didn't belong. You do—"

She laid her cheek against his hair. "We'll paint the bookcases green," she crooned, "and have strawberry shortcake every night—did you know I can cook?—and plant a vegetable garden in back, and have breakfasts on the little sun porch, and—"

"Golly!" he breathed. "And you're sure—you don't mind giving up the stage—your career?"

"No. At first I thought I did. I tried to take you with me into that life, when I realized that I was beginning to care. But love doesn't last in the world behind the footlights, Bill. I've seen it die, time after time. And I want ours to last—forever."

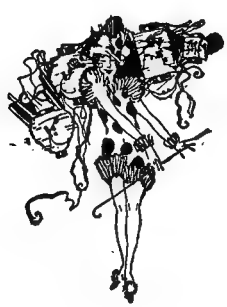
Her eyes were deep wells.

He looked up at her, still dazed by the wonder of it. "How you can love a chump like me," he blundered, "I don't see. But I'm glad."

"You're the dearest, blindest boy in the world. You're sure that Lydia isn't still important to you?"

"Absolutely sure. She just wanted me when she thought some one else did. She's spoiled, and—selfish. I see it now. She was just some one who wore the dreams I wove until the real girl came along!"

And Marda, slipping to her knees beside him, answered him with a kiss.



Planets of Destiny

By CAROL YOUNG

BY the application of the scientific principles of astrology your questions will be answered in these pages. But the publishers of this magazine, and also the conductor of this department, do not hold themselves responsible for the accuracy of the replies, inasmuch as many readers furnish incorrect birth data and others do not know the hour of their birth. This department is conducted only for such help or interest as readers may obtain from it.

One question is allowed each reader. Question must be accompanied by coupon to be found at the end of this department. Please do not ask questions concerning death, speculation or the whereabouts of lost property.

It is very important that you give the following data: time of birth (hour of the day or night), date, month, year and place. Also sex.

No personal questions will be answered by direct mail, but if you will send ten cents in stamps to cover cost of mailing, All-Story will be glad to return to you a short estimate of your character and of the future influences for those in your Zodiacal sign, giving suggestions for at least the next two years.

DAILY ASTROLOGICAL GUIDE

For the Next Two Weeks

September 20—This day doesn't promise much; the hasty individual is apt to find himself in trouble; control the emotions all down the line.

September 21—A pleasant Sunday here if you will use it for thinking things over, planning the future, taking short trips and studying.

September 22—Not very strong or good influences in the afternoon to-day, but the morning and evening are fair, so you can accomplish much if you work.

September 23—Social and emotional matters well indicated in the latter part of the day and evening; but the morning threatens friction.

September 24—This is a good one; the alert person will embrace the opportunities that come into his or her circle. Dull people always lose.

September 25—Still another good day. When they come in pairs like this there is much that can be done if you will work hard and intelligently.

September 26—Take it easy and avoid chances; make no important changes. If something comes up that looks big, think it over till a better time.

September 27—This is a good day for the inventive and imaginative; they can find many applications of their talents if they are industrious.

September 28—The best part of to-day comes in

Google

the late afternoon and evening; take care of ordinary matters in the morning and early afternoon.

September 29—Many things are apt to go wrong if you are not careful to-day. Guard all relations with those of the other sex, or you may suffer.

September 30—Another day that doesn't promise much but negative influences. Control temper, avoid extravagance and look out for accidents.

October 1—Milk the cows, feed the chickens, or do whatever your regular chores happen to be to-day; don't attempt anything new, even if tempted.

October 2—Can't get excited favorably over the prospects for to-day, although the mid-section looks slightly good for those who are on their toes.

October 3—A little better than the average, so there is chance of getting something valuable into the old sack; but don't try new ventures in morning.

ALIMONY

A great many people have double standards for the performance of the two sexes in their matrimonial adventures and don't know it.

For instance, I heard a very intelligent and charming lady talking about how terrible it is that there are some men who think woman's place is exclusively in the home, except when the lord of the manor wants to take his wife out with him. She was very indignant about it. Such was all wrong with her. She said a man ought to grant the same privileges to her that he claimed for himself. If he wanted to run around with other companions, he should have no objections to her doing the same if she wanted to.

"I don't believe in a double standard," she said emphatically.

"Then why do you think it is the husband's place to grant this or that to his wife?" I inquired. She had said the husband ought to allow her the same privileges. "Why shouldn't it be the other way around? Why not say the wife should grant the husband the right to go out with the boys when he wants to if she insists on traipsing around with her girl friends?"

"That's right," she said; "I never looked at it that way before. I suppose I have just been letting my husband get away with the idea he is the ruler of our marriage."

Then I asked her about her sister and how she was getting along.

"Oh, Irene? She's having a miserable time. John isn't paying her the alimony the court ordered and she is afraid she will have to go to work."

"Are they separated?" I asked.

"Yes. Didn't you hear? They got married too young, I guess. Anyway, they each fell in love with some one else and decided it was all over between them. They agreed to disagree and talked it all over. She thought it would be the chivalrous thing for him to do to let her get the divorce from him and he thought so, too. Neither of them was to blame, I suppose, any more than the other."

"What was it you were saying about alimony?" I continued.

"Why, when they came before the judge, John admitted that all the stories she told about him were true—but both he and Irene knew they were just the made-up lies they were going to tell in order to get the divorce—and the judge ordered him to pay her two hundred dollars a month."

"Of course she wouldn't hold him to that!" I exclaimed.

"Why not? He's a man and she's a woman. He ought to pay!" was the surprised answer of the sweet and charming lady.

All this is quite according to our present customs. But somehow it doesn't seem right to me.

In a case like John's and Irene's, it seems to me they should not expect any one to pay alimony. Both of them made the same mistake. If one should suffer, they should both suffer. If one is no more guilty than the other, why should one of them pay for it and the other get a profit?

To carry the point a little further, it also seems to me that if the woman is wrong (and plenty of times she is) it is pretty small potatoes to invoke the old laws of King Arthur's round table and drag in a lot of foolishness about chivalry from the customs of five centuries ago. I think the woman should pay alimony if she has wronged her husband and he can prove it. Of course, if the husband is wrong, he should pay. Marriage is a serious relationship and if it were understood in advance by both parties that any funny business on the part of either husband or wife would cost plenty, there would be more regard for the sanctity of the American home.

I don't believe in the double standard at any point along the line. What's fair for the woman is also fair for the man, and vice versa.

Do any of my readers think I am wrong? If so, consider this as your open forum and tell me all about it. This isn't a one-way street. I'm not the only one who can do the talking. If you have an argument on this point, come in with it. It will be given discussion if it is worthy.

MATRIMONY SERVICE

Here are those who win the answer this time. They have all asked some variation of the question "When would be the best time for me to marry?" At any rate, that is the question I am here answering for them, regardless of what they asked. They may have put it wrong, such

as "Whom will I marry?" but I have changed it and am advising when will be the next time it will be safe or advisable for each of these people to take such an important step. It is the next possible time for each. Nothing any good in between now and then, even if it does seem like a long while to wait for some. I can't help it. You got yourself born when you did and the planets are my rule makers. If you don't believe in them, or in my accuracy, why, then you will do as you please and find out who was right.

Here they are. First the initials, then the birthday, then the *next* time at which they can decide on matrimony with hope of success.

L. S., November 2, 1910—March, 1931; but November, 1934, will be much better.

S. A. W., January 20, 1901—August or September, 1933.

E. M., January 25, 1911—September, 1933.

A. R., February 1, 1913—June, 1934.

T. W. S., September 19, 1910—August, 1933.

D. B., July 10, 1906—May, 1931.

L. A. L., December 14, 1891—November, 1931.

R. F. C., December 2, 1905—August, 1931.

A. M., June 24, 1914—May or June, 1938.

G. R. L., March 4, 1907—April, 1931.

I. S., October 2, 1910—October, 1933.

M. A. E., January 25, 1914—January, 1938.

E. M. W., August 15, 1915—October, 1936.

B. R., December 3, 1913—December, 1935.

M. L. S., February 4, 1915—February, 1938.

H. R., July 17, 1910—June, 1931.

S. M. M., April 29, 1882—September, 1932.

L. A., July 15, 1908—June, 1931.

G. M. McG., December 2, 1898—August, 1931.

M. P. S., August 13, 1909—October, 1931.

M. G., January 23, 1905—September, 1933.

O. M. R., January 18, 1914—August, 1933.

H. R. R., August 27, 1909—August, 1932.

M. C., September 19, 1907—August, 1933.

V. B., March 14, 1904—May or June, 1931.

A. M., February 23, 1911—October, 1934.

E. M. P., June 23, 1889—October, 1934.

S. Z., September 4, 1911—October, 1932.

S. M., August 10, 1911—January, 1932.

Y. B., April 10, 1908—October, 1931.

E. W., September 29, 1897—October, 1933.

H. T., July 28, 1905—August, 1931.

B. S., February 25, 1911—November, 1934.

O. D., February 22, 1904—August, 1932.

M. K. G., March 13, 1910—February, 1935.

B. K., July 5, 1909—August, 1930, or April, 1931.

V. A., December 28, 1912—December, 1936.

H. L. S., March 3, 1905—August, 1930, or April, 1931.

H. M. R., January 26, 1900—October, 1933.

M. H. L., March 9, 1911—January, 1935.

R. H., February 7, 1895—August, 1934.

R. M. B., March 2, 1908—March, 1931.

Mrs. N. McK., September 16, 1885—December, 1932.

F. P. S., October 8, 1906—November, 1933.

M. R., December 15, 1906—January, 1932.

A. L. W., September 4, 1912—January, 1937.

S. S., July 5, 1905—April, 1931.

W. H., July 20, 1908—June, 1931.

M. J. D., September 27, 1912—September, 1933.

G. C., July 21, 1911—August, 1931.

No, that isn't all I have of this type; but, my gracious, we can't leave all the rest out in the cold. More in next issue.

Let's see what we can do for those who ask about occupation.

L. S., October 9, 1915.—No, keep away from real estate. And don't deal with older people. You can serve women and children well. E. K., August 15, 1913.—Yes, you could be a good cartoonist, but you will have to control a tendency to become bitter and sarcastic. Mrs. V. S., January 7, 1911.—The restaurant work is the best of the lines you mention. Hard work is ahead of you, but you can make the grade and some day be at the head of your own venture, at least in a small way.

E. O. F., man born July 19, 1910, can make good as draftsman. He should keep away from dealing direct with the general public. M. F., November 27, 1907.—Use your imagination; but keep away from mechanical matters. G. A., December 14, 1911.—Entertainment, philosophy, travel are your best lines; perhaps you can make a combination of them.

M. R. E. D., May 13, 1907.—You can do anything you want to do; look out for scattering yourself over too many lines at once. V. B., September 14, 1916.—Something technical; stay clear of financial occupations and the professions. Mrs. B. R., October 12, 1891.—Nursing is a very good line for you. Keep it up.

A. M. B., November 10, 1898.—By all means keep on with your music; it looks much better than commercial work for you. Mrs. H. H., December 16, 1902.—Business is better for you than marriage as a career, although whichever you are in you are apt to wish you were in the other. E. T., December 28, 1911.—Everything is against you at present; wait another year.

M. J., February 15, 1912.—Can't say what you actually will do, you know, but I cannot recom-

mend any immediate changes for you. H. B., January 29, 1911.—You can do as well away from home, or a bit better; you will be happier when on your own. E. M., February 23, 1915.—Not for at least two more years; make no emotional changes.

D. L. K., October 1, 1911.—Don't know what occupation you have chosen, but your present indications are that you will not like it for long. L. F. B., December 15, 1906.—Things look better for you in all ways next year; avoid mechanical and financial occupations. Mrs. H. S., June 15, 1909.—Something connected with selling, traveling and dealing with women or household appliances.

You have a slight error in your Sidereal Time, F. V. F., born April 29, 1899. I figure it should be in the neighborhood of 14-13-44. In regard to your question, it is not so much a matter of whether you will as whether you should. Your ruler opposed to Neptune and Mars in the seventh are the essential factors in your partnership problem. Be sure your partner doesn't offend any of these or your Moon, the ruler of the seventh.

Many people write in to ask if they will ever be rich. Most of them don't say anything about appreciating the fact that things worth while in this world must be earned. But here is S. M., born April 21, 1914, who does appreciate that important fact. Congratulations, Mr. M., on the part of it you already understand. Learn also to know that you are one from whom others, especially women, will expect to take whatever you accumulate. Be governed and guided accordingly.

It has been in the state of your mind, Mrs. W. L., born March 30 (in what year?), according to the transits over your position of the Sun. I cannot tell what your other planets are unless you give the year of birth. However, if you will apply the lessons you are now learning, or should be learning, the past difficulties will become stepping stones to better conditions. Most Aries people are getting ahead now, mentally first and in the outside world a little later.

Find out why he drinks, Mrs. E. G., born February 13, 1912. I assume he drinks to excess or you wouldn't be worrying about it. Perhaps he prefers his liquor to a somewhat young and probably inferior wife. You can do much by completing your education. You don't like the implications in this answer, but they are the truth. Change yourself and he will be more nearly what you want.

THIS COUPON MUST ACCOMPANY EACH QUESTION ASKED

CAROL YOUNG
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

This coupon is not good after Oct. 4. One question is allowed each reader.

Date of Birth..... ....., ... Time.....
MONTH DATE YEAR A.M. OR P.M.

Place..... Sex.....
MALE OR FEMALE

QUESTION:

.....

.....

Name.....

Street and No.....

City..... State.....

If you wish interpretation of your Zodiacal sign, inclose ten cents (see rules).

Handwriting and Happiness

By JOHN FRASER

JOHN FRASER, gifted handwriting expert, who has made a name for himself both in his native England and here in America, will analyze your handwriting. If you wish to know whether your sweetheart is the right man for you to marry, inclose samples of your own and your sweetheart's handwritings and address your letter to Mr. Fraser, care "Service for Sweethearts." If you wish his help in finding the profession for which you are best fitted, address him care "Your Career." For general reading, care "Character Analysis."

You may take advantage of one or any service, but a coupon must accompany each request for handwriting analysis. Coupon will be found at the end of this department.

Mr. Fraser bases his judgments on the scientific rules of graphology. In no case does he forecast the future or attempt to reveal the past. Scientific graphology undertakes only to reveal the inner secrets of your nature.

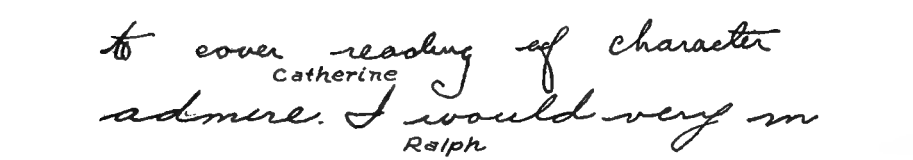
As many answers will be given on these pages as space permits. All other questions will be answered by mail. A stamped, addressed envelope must accompany your request for analysis.

A YOUNG mother in Johnson City, Tennessee, is an ardent reader of ALL-STORY. She wrote me a letter the other day, in which she expressed her appreciation of the analysis I had sent her in the month of July. It was a simple letter of thanks from a woman who had the responsibility of a household and the care of three little children—seven, four, and two years of age, respectively.

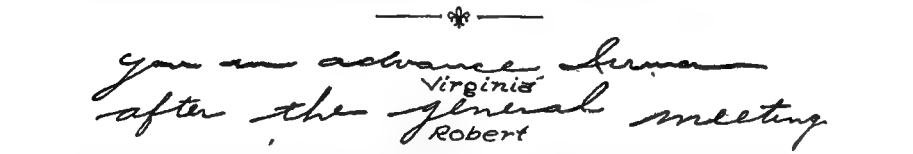
Well, I want to tell you, among all the hundreds of letters I received that day, none gave me the thrill that this little mother's few lines gave me. Thank you, Mrs. L., you are one in a million.

I mention this little incident in my busy life since letters of thanks are as scarce as hens' teeth. As a matter of fact, they are so scarce that when they do come, they are like a gleam of sunshine on a cloudy day. So any of you thousands who have been helped in any way by what I have told you in my analyses, just follow Mrs. L.'s example. It would do me a world of good, just to know that I had helped you in some little way.

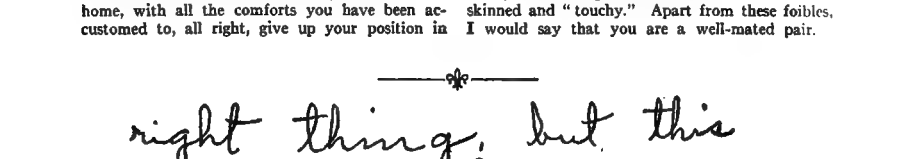
SERVICE FOR SWEETHEARTS



(Miss Catherine P., Shreveport, La.) Your letter interested me until I came to the part where "you had your doubts as to Ralph's sincerity." I got angry after that and wished I had you beside me at my desk where I could "talk turkey" to you to my heart's content. If the truth were told, Catherine, Ralph is as worthy a chap as ever fell in love with a Louisianian. He is a boy who has all the earmarks of a successful man, who knows his way in the world. Sentimentally, he is a "wow," and one who might well be called a "one woman man." Where you get your doubts as to his fickleness and want of depth puzzles me considerably. You are by no means an angel yourself, and why should you look for the sprouting of wings on poor Ralph's shoulders? I really feel sorry for your boy friend, he'll have to put up with a lot if he marries you. In the last analysis, it is up to him to say "Yes" or "No," but I will still ha'e ma doots as to whether you will be really happy as husband and wife. You are not suited.



(Miss Virginia T., Reno, Nev.) You impress me as a very loving pair of young people who ought to succeed in making each other happy when you get married. Your temperaments are pretty much alike in most things. Whether you should give up your position in the office after the marriage is entirely a matter for yourself to settle. Your sweetheart should be the judge as to whether your two hundred dollars per month should cease. If he is able to give you a nice home, with all the comforts you have been accustomed to, all right, give up your position in business. On the other hand, if Robert's salary is inadequate at the present time, my advice to you is to postpone the wedding until such time as he is able to provide you with a home. These modern delicatessen marriages never lead to the road of real happiness, and I'm afraid yours would be no exception to the general rule. Among your "weaknesses" I notice, Virginia, that you have a great obsession for spending money. I would call you extravagant. You are also too thin-skinned and "touchy." Apart from these foibles, I would say that you are a well-mated pair.



(Miss Susan R., Covington, Ky.) I see you have fallen in love with a real Irishman, who has all the characteristics of his race. I am glad to note in his pen formations that his wit and humor are never very far from the surface of his nature. He also has, as you doubtless know by this time, a temper, and a good Irish one at that! I have to confess I don't see much in common between you two young folk. Since I don't know how old you are, I am uncertain as to whether you are unsophisticated or if your education has been neglected. Whatever it is you are poles apart

in a great many things. I can see clearly that you are fighting against disappointment and discouragement. Your living conditions are not to your taste. You must have a "skeleton in your closet," as the saying is, which is continually confronting you. There are also indications in your pen strokes of some bodily weakness. With it all, however, I see you keep a brave front to the public and keep smiling even though your heart is heavy with doubts and fears. Since you have asked for my opinion as to the compatibility of your natures, and whether you would be happy with Pat as a husband, I would say that there is not much chance of happiness unless conditions —social and personal—were entirely changed with you. If I were you, I would give this my serious consideration before you consented to be Pat's wife.

Taking up so much of your valuable time and Mary
Labor for a license before he can give
Gilbert

(Miss Mary C., Providence, R. I.) I think you have made a very good choice in the matter of a sweetheart. Gilbert is a very fine sort of chap with affection and common sense to spare. He is the more aggressive of the two, and the one who will guide things around the house when you get married. You are of the quiet, retiring and clinging type. It is obvious to me that you will depend on Gilbert to a very large extent, and with such dependence you will be inclined to sink your own individuality a little too much for your ultimate good. If the truth were told, you require a good deal more backbone than you have at present. Your fiancé is such a live wire, he will sooner or later get tired of your harmless and hot-house plant nature. If I were you, Mary, I would begin at once to be a little robust and self-assertive. Don't be an echo of that boy friend of yours. Think for yourself and let him know before the marriage ceremony comes off that you have a mind of your own and that you intend to use it to the best of your ability. If you adopt this method of living and thinking, I'm sure it will be better for both of you.

YOUR CAREER

I want to thank you

(Miss Bessie J., Bangor, Me.) A girl of your culture and analytical mind has a wonderful chance to make a name for herself as an accountant, a chemist, or a librarian. You have also great possibilities for the legal profession. The whole structure of your mind lends itself to research work of some kind or other. Your power of penetration is very pronounced, while your memory is also a splendid asset to you in any of these lines of business I have just mentioned. When it comes to reasoning out a problem, your logic could always be relied upon, with the result that your arguments would always carry weight. In your own personal life, you are sensitive to a degree. Your patience is a minus quantity at times, and your love for authority is never very far from the surface of your nature. You evidently gravitate toward the mystical in life and the finer things, such as poetry, music and art of all kinds. You are a girl who could never be rushed into a decision. You take time to think things through to a finish before committing yourself in any way. Altogether, I would say you have an excellent chance to succeed.

willing to pay more

(Miss Lucy Mc. C., Bay City, Mich.) Though you are feminine to the finger tips, you have a man's head on your shoulders. That is to say, you have all the qualifications of a person who knows how to run a successful business. I discover great leadership qualities in your make-up, and with such inherent characteristics I would not hesitate in suggesting to you a career as an interior decorator. You have the advantage of a good education, and your natural business ability should stand you in good stead. You are physically and mentally active. Your mind travels a mile a minute. You are burning the candle at both ends in your anxiety to get on in the world. Socially, you are a good mixer. You are suave and sympathetic, direct in your manner of speech without being in the least authoritative. I notice

one of your principal foibles is your love for ceremony and palaver. You evidently fall for flattery and like to be told how good you are. So do your sisters, so why should I pick on you, Lucy? I wish you the best of luck.

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

writing to you for a

(Miss Ann F., Fort Wayne, Ind.) You are an ambitious girl with a disposition that is buoyant and energetic. Difficulties mean nothing to you, for you never seem to get discouraged. I'm glad to see that you have the habit of turning your clouds inside out, and looking for the silver lining all the time. That's what we all ought to do—but we don't. Moreover, you are a sympathetic and kindly girl who never seems to be happier than when serving and assisting the unfortunate ones of the world. You are far from perfect, of course, but I have to confess that your negative qualities are not very deadly sins. Of course, I discover lots of temper in your make-up and an impulsive gesture or two. Your little pot soon boils over when you don't get your own way, but on the other hand these outbursts are few and far between. I see you also like to chatter and don't stop at a little bit of gossip now and then. I would call you affectionate. You simply feed on romance. Being the good mixer that you are, I'm sure you have many boy friends who think the world of you. Altogether, you are a very fine type of girl who is capable of making the world a great deal better a place to live in.

to know just what

(Miss Margie S., Mason City, Iowa.) You are a girl with heaps of imaginative power. You have built many "castles in Spain" for yourself and dreamed many beautiful dreams which of course have never come true. You would be all the better, Margie, to endeavor to make those splendid visions come to pass. I'm afraid you are like most of your type—all mentality and no vitality. You live in the clouds too much and seldom take life seriously. Looking deeper into your nature, I notice that you are of the hot-house plant type of human being who requires careful handling. I would not be surprised if you had a snarling disposition and were somewhat of a fault-finder around the house. In addition to this, you are inclined to be morbid and get the "blues" quite frequently. All this may be sad reading to you, Margie, but my object in writing this way is to give you another slant on yourself. It would do you a world of good if you could. Sit down and think this over. Will you?

THIS COUPON AND A STAMPED ADDRESSED ENVELOPE MUST ACCOMPANY REQUEST FOR ANALYSIS

JOHN FRASER,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway,
New York City.

This coupon is not good after October 4. A stamped addressed envelope must be inclosed when forwarding.

I enclose handwriting specimen for
—Service for Sweethearts.
—Your Career.
—Character Analysis.
(Check which you prefer. One coupon must accompany each choice.)

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Heart-to-Heart

Tell Your Love Troubles to

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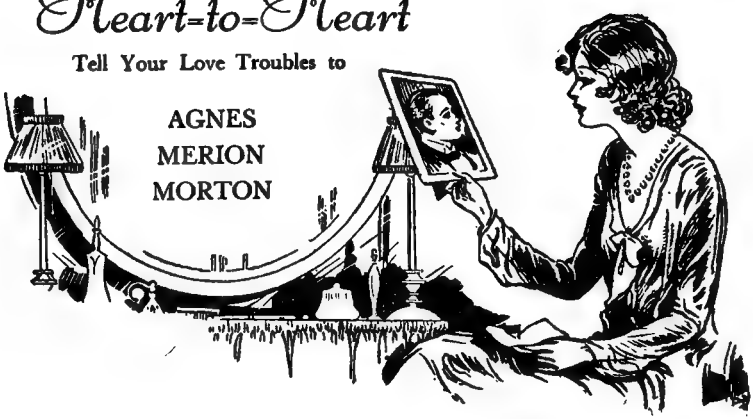


MRS. MORTON wants you to feel that she is a friend—some one to whom it is a comfort to tell your problems, who will advise and encourage you in your struggle for happiness, and who is always here to help. She is interested in you. Write to her freely, addressing your letter care All-Story Magazine, 280 Broadway, N. Y. C.

Every letter is confidential.

As Mrs. Morton receives so many letters; she cannot publish answers to all in the space allotted to her. Some, therefore, are answered by mail. Be sure to inclose a stamped, addressed envelope with your question.

GLEN SUTHERLAND, who wrote us that her young man cannot make up his mind "to leave his mother," in order to keep his promise of marriage to her, has had several letters of counsel, all of which agree with the vigorous and slangy epistle printed below:

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

There are plenty of women who *smother* their children instead of *mothering* them, and Glen's mother-in-law-never-to-be is evidently that kind. The man is a spineless ass, of course, but perhaps anybody would be if brought up by such a woman, so he's more to be pitied than blamed. But he has no right to be a dog in the manger and tie up a nice girl four or five years, when he has no intention of marrying her. For he really has no such intention. He hasn't the nerve to stand up to that woman, and he keeps other men away from Glen, and keeps her from finding somebody else because while he's around she doesn't want anybody but him.

The thing to do with that fellow, Glen, is put the skids under him and give them a shove. Can him, give him the air. You'll never regret it. You'll see him in his true lights when you're a little farther away from him, and then you'll wonder why you ever wasted a minute's thought and worry about him.

I knew a man just like him once. His mother was always whining, "You won't have me very long. Be good to me while I'm here," and so on, and so on. She made him sacrifice his whole life to her and when he fell in love with a fine girl he didn't have the courage to be true to her. He wanted to have his cake and eat it, too. He got engaged to her, and kept her waiting, and she loved him and was willing to wait. When she was over thirty, and he thirty-five, his mother finally died. She was killed in an accident—otherwise she'd have outlived them both. That kind always do. Their hearts, or liver, or whatever is the matter with them, never give out because they take too good care of themselves and see to it that every one else shall take good care of them, too.

Well, she got bumped off, and then he wanted to wait another year "out of respect." During that other year he fell for a little snip in her teens, and she was a wise guy, and the minute he popped the question—or maybe she popped it,

you never know—she got him down to City Hall before he knew what was happening to him. The other girl is still waiting.

So take a word from one who knows, Glen, and kick that fellow out of your life before it's too late for you ever to want, or attract, a real man. GLEN SUTHERLAND'S WELL WISHER.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I have never written to you for advice, but I have read your answers to others in trouble and you always seem to have a word of cheer. Let me tell you my story and perhaps you can also advise me.

I am twenty-two years old and have been married three years. My husband is of a different religion. We were married by a justice of the peace without his folks knowing about it. I had to be operated on about six months before I was married, and was sick for a long time afterward. I took a notion that I would like to move on a farm and perhaps I would get stronger. My husband didn't want to, but gave in to me and we went. Well, after the first year we found all our money gone and we were about five hundred dollars in debt. I had to be operated on again, our stock died, and the crops were a failure, so we came back to town.

My husband's people won't have anything to do with me and blame me entirely for the bad luck we had on the farm. They have talked to my husband, and he also blames me. I do not care what his people think, for they are an ignorant sort, but I don't want my husband to go against me, too. It almost breaks my heart, for I feel like I was not entirely to blame for our misfortunes. However, as it is partly my fault I don't believe I can ever be happy until I can at least pay part of this debt with money I earn myself.

I am not strong and have only one talent that I know of, and I feel rather doubtful about that. When I was in school our professor said I had a talent for writing stories and he often had my stories printed in our school paper. But I have no one to advise me or tell me where to send my stories, or in what form they must be sent in. It seems that all the magazines have certain ones to write for them and don't need any more. Please tell me, Mrs. Morton, is there any chance for a beginner? If some of your readers who have been successful in story writing would only write to me and tell me of their experience I would certainly be thankful.

IN NEED OF ADVICE.

Yes, of course there is chance for beginners. Everybody was a beginner once. Young writers are the hope of the future, and every editor is on the lookout for them, and just as anxious to find a story by a new writer that he can buy as the writer can possibly be to sell it.

It is hard to break in, however, not because a particular magazine is written by staff writers, but because the new ones do not understand the fundamentals of the game. First of all, a manuscript should be neat in appearance—typed double spaced, on one side of the paper (paper just as good as you can afford)—on a machine that has clean type. Eyes that read all day get too tired to be strained over illegible, faint or dirt-clogged typing. A good first impression is vital. Then you must remember that magazines are specialized; each one uses a particular type of story, and unless you have studied the market you may submit stories where they will be entirely unsuitable. ALL-STORY, for instance, does not use first-person "confession" material, yet the editor's desk is often piled high with stories of that kind.

Then you must have an idea and plot, and know how to write them up. A mistake often made by those who want to break into writing is that they think all they need is a piece of paper and a typewriter. A gift for writing needs to be trained just as much as a gift for singing, or painting, or playing a musical instrument, needs to be trained. There isn't one writer in a hundred who sells the first story he turns out—nor the second, nor the fifth. You have to try and try, and keep on trying, practicing, studying, observing. It is very hard at first, and very discouraging. For that reason, those who need money should go in for something which has a sure return, in preference to writing. In almost all towns there are possible ways for a woman to earn money at home, even if it is no more than sewing hooks and eyes on cards. Some service like that, for which the returns may be small but unfailing, would be better for you in your present situation than trying to write would be. When you and your husband are back on your feet financially you may begin the creative work, and learn how to tell a story in an acceptable manner. The road is long and difficult, and beset with many trials and discouragements, but to those who have the gift and who persist in their efforts to develop it, literature is its own exceeding great reward.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I am a girl of eighteen, live in the country and do not care anything about any of the boys and girls around and I do not go any place with them and grow very lonely during my summer vacation. As I go to high school about one hundred miles away from home, I have plenty of good times at school, but here is the proposition. I would like to be at home where I can do about the place as I please, as you know any one naturally feels like they are imposing when they are late returning from a place. However, I board with a man and wife who are very sweet to me and have never said anything about anything I did. But I can't get dad to move from the country and my life isn't any pleasure whatever here, and I have no desire to have any boy friends out here. However, I have plenty of chances, but to be plain they seem silly.

While I was away to school there was a boy who lived about fifty miles from the place I went to school. He came to my town and began going with a girl next door to me, then I met him and we began going together and after he

returned to his home he wrote real often and would come to see me real often, and neither one of us went with any one else until he wrote me and I answered; but he failed to get the letter, so he didn't write any more. Neither did I. It wasn't long until he came back and came to see me and we got along just fine until one night he was at my home (boarding place) and a boy whom I had once been engaged to came in, not expecting me to be dated. He had just returned from a long trip. I turned him away and it wasn't long until a boy I know from a near-by town came and I pretended that this was my cousin, but my boy friend had overheard part of our conversation and, of course, knew better. Finally I acknowledged I was lying to him, and we both were sorry, for we dearly loved each other and he says I'm the only girl he will ever love, and he is the only boy I have loved and hope to ever, for he was an ideal man. We had one other evening together. Since we haven't heard from each other and he promised to write, but I didn't get a letter, please tell me how to win him back. Please explain to me just the kind of girl a "perfect man" likes. I know different types like different girls, but please tell me the kind a real man likes. I am a brunette. Perhaps you may get my description better—five feet five inches, weigh one hundred and thirty, have wavy hair and said to be rather good-looking. I take active part in all societies in school and elsewhere and love dancing and other sports. Please tell me how to win this boy who is rather different from other boys. I have plenty of friends, both boys and girls, but some girls seem rather envious toward me because of some of my real boy friends and try to vamp them, but do not have much luck.

Also please tell me the most impressive way to apply for a position. I have got to get a new job soon. If this happens to be printed, please do not state name or address. Please be sure and tell me how I may win W. over, and do you think he could care for me as he once did?

WINNIE.

I think the type of man you describe likes a girl on whose word he can absolutely depend. It is too bad you told him a falsehood because he may never believe another word you say. You were not engaged to him; there was no reason why you should not have another caller, and to lie in a small matter might make him think you would also lie in a big matter.

Whether you can win him back depends partly on just how forgiving a person he is, and partly on the strength of his feeling for you, which is at present outraged. I hope you will be able to show him that he can trust you again, but anyway, you must learn a lesson from this experience. It is better not to lie even when you can escape being found out, but there are very few who are able to escape discovery indefinitely.

When we have made a mistake, the only thing to do is live it down as soon as we can. Consistently show your friend that you are sorry, that you will not go on in the same old way, and he will gradually learn to trust you again and to take you at your new value.

About applying for a position, I think the most important thing is a neat appearance. Everything you put on when you go to an interview should be fresh and clean and your outside clothes should harmonize in color and not be too fussy. The consciousness of being well dressed has a psychological effect on your manner, too, and you will be able to make a better impression simply because you know you look nice.

Slave Wife, who wrote to us some months ago about the unhappy conditions in her home, has written again, and I am so glad to have the letter that I want to share it with all of you. It is an occasional "return" like this that makes us feel the department is not conducted in vain.

DEAR MRS. MORTON:

I wonder if you and the readers of the Heart-to-Heart corner remember me? I wrote to you when I was pretty nearly desperate, my life was so unhappy and so lonely. I guess you all thought I was a fool for living the way I did. I realized when I read the answers to my letter that things were just as much my fault as my husband's, but it was a long time before I got up gumption enough to do what you advised. Then I found out that my people had been to see me and he had sent them away, saying I was on a vacation in the mountains. I hadn't had a "vacation" either with him or without him since we were married, and that very day I was locked in the house, crying my head off as usual.

Well, it seemed as if that was the last straw. I couldn't bear any more, and couldn't see any chance of ever living right unless I got up spunk to rebel. I thought and thought of it until I was mad enough, and then I broke a window and got out and went down town to see the judge. My husband had hidden my shoes, so I had to go in my stocking feet, and maybe I wasn't lame by the time I got there—and the stockings worn to ribbons, of course. I had to go to the judge's house because court wasn't in session—in a way it was fortunate it was hot weather, for I didn't have any coat to wear, either, or even a hat.

I told him the story—a very kind and human old man. He took me in and his wife gave me some clothes, and then they called my husband up at his work and told him to stop by. And what the judge said to him was plenty. I was almost sorry for the poor fellow, although I knew he deserved it all. He said we'd have to come to court and get my husband put under bond if anything like that happened again, and he wanted to see me going past every day or two, and out riding with my one friend, Miss Allen, and at church and all the parties and gatherings in town. He said I was to report to him *privately* at least once a week, and if I ever had a cause for complaint again he'd have my husband locked up. As for the way he had treated me, he said this and that about it.

Well, we lived in a little place then and, of course, it was all over town in no time. Some people had seen me, and the judge's maid listened

and told, and my husband's life wasn't worth living for a while. He got razzed terribly in the shop. So he brought me back to the city where we were both brought up, where my family are, and he got a job because he's a good mechanic and can always get one, even in these hard times, and we have a little home right down the street from my mother and sister, and I see them every day, and I'm living like a human being at last. Of course we still have our little difficulties. It is hard for him to forget his jealousy, even though he never has cause for it. It isn't just men—he is jealous of my women friends and my relatives, too. But he tries to control it better than he used to, and I think the biggest reason was because some of the men he used to work with told him they'd heard that *I* was "queer," and that's why I never went anywhere. I guess I *was* queer, to let him get away with all he did for so long. I'm still sort of nervous, with all I went through, but we are working together now, and help each other, instead of pulling apart all the time.

And I owe it all to your department, Mrs. Morton, for I never should have thought of doing what I did unless you had suggested it, and I never would have picked up the courage even if I had thought of it.

Gratefully yours,

EX-SLAVE WIFE.

Reader's Choice Coupon

Help the editors select just the kind of story you like best by telling them which story in this issue appealed most to you.

This coupon and four others from previous or future issues will enable you to obtain free an original illustration in this issue. Just inclose five coupons in your letter and a drawing will be forwarded to you.

THE EDITORS,
ALL-STORY MAGAZINE,
280 Broadway, New York City.

Here is my opinion of the stories in this issue:

Cast Aside .....

The Debt She Paid.....

The Waters of Happiness .....

Wait For Love .....

Cherry .....

Holliday Hearts .....

Tangled Heartstrings .....

Her Port of Dreams .....

Alone in the Crowd .....

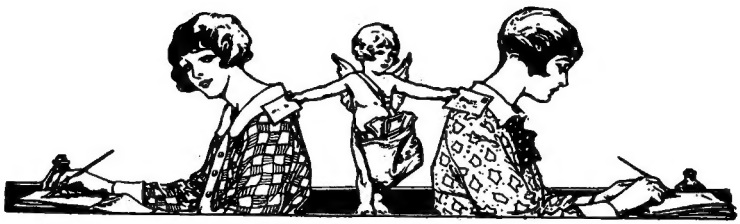
The Girl Who Wanted Everything.....

My favorite authors are .....

Name .....

Address .....

(Name and address may be omitted, if desired)



The Lonesome Club

Conducted by DOROTHEA DALE

MAKE friends! Join the Lonesome Club and soon you will be getting more letters than any one you know.

Here's how to do it: if you wish your letter published in these pages write to Mrs. Dale, care of ALL-STORY, *280 Broadway, New York City, and describe yourself. Try to make it as interesting as possible—tell little things about yourself that will make others want to write to you.*

If you wish to communicate with the pals whose letters appear here, inclose your letter in a plain, stamped envelope and send it to Mrs. Dale. No letters will be forwarded without the extra stamp.

If you are a girl, you may write to other girls; if a man, to other men.

Please do not ask for the address of any one.

DEAR MRS. DALE:

I am living in the Hawaiian Islands and would like to hear from pen pals all around the globe. I am fourteen, have black hair in wind-blown bob. My hobbies are singing, dancing, whistling and letter writing. MYRTLE.

I am twenty-three, brown hair and a greenish eye, five feet three, and weigh 137. I am interested in almost any topic.

FRANCES OF THE BRONX.

I'm sixteen, five feet three, have curly brown hair and brown eyes. I love to dance, swim and all other sports. Now come on, kids, write! Sign me as PAL OF PENNA.

On the watchout for pen pals from all over the world. They ought to be from about fourteen to twenty, but I'm not particular. I'm a Jewish girl of fifteen, have long, black, curly hair and brown eyes—am about five feet tall, answer to the name of Rhea. My favorite sports are tennis, golf, swimming and dancing. I play both piano and violin. Come on—lemme see who writes the peppiest letters. 'Cause the peppiest letter wins a prize, so hurry!

RHEA OF HOT SPRINGS.

I'm just a lonesome boy of nineteen back here in Fort Atkinson. You know that's where Black Hawk had his war. I live just one block from where the fort stood. I have blond hair and blue eyes. I am five feet eight and weigh 136. I am fond of all sports, the main one being baseball. I am a good right fielder, taking after Cuyler on the Cubs; and I also am a fair hitter.

I like blondes very well, and I also like curly-headed brunettes a little. Blondes always catch my eye, though. If some of you would care to know about Hollywood I can tell you about it, 'cause I have been there. I have two wonderful pictures of that wonderful beauty, Anita Page, and I'll send one to the first who writes me. I have fair skin and a ritzy Pontiac sport roadster. I like music, but don't care for dancing. I play an Hawaiian guitar, my favorite instrument, like nobody's business. To any who would like a souvenir of the Black Hawk monument in Fort Atkinson, I'll send one on receipt of your snapshot or photo. Now please write to

RAY OF FORT ATKINSON.

I am fifteen years old, brunette and blue-eyed. I am five feet six and will answer letters from girls of all ages. Every one write soon to

LONESOME POLLY.

I am from the good old pine tree State, forty years old, tall, have blue eyes and brown hair.

Google

Would be glad to have pals from everywhere, as I have a great deal of leisure time and enjoy writing letters. I read a great deal, all kinds of literature. Enjoy most all sports, and love the ocean. Pals between forty and fifty please write.

MAINE COAST.

Won't some one please write to me? Am not exactly lonesome—I have plenty of girl friends—but my sweetheart is in the navy. Am a stenographer, seventeen, five feet three, have light brown hair and blue eyes, and weigh 109. Girls that are waitresses and all those that like to dance please write to me.

TRUE TO THE NAVY.

Wanted: Somebody and everybody everywhere to write to a pal who isn't lonely but curious for new friends. I am eighteen, five feet five, and weigh about 127. Have dark brown hair, blue-green-gray eyes, and dimples. Love to read and all outdoor and indoor sports. Can drive a car, love riding and dancing. Let every one write to CHICAGO BILL.

I am seventeen, have Irish-blue eyes, light hair, weigh 104, and am five feet one. Come on, everybody, and write to SWEDE.

What, ho! I hail from a snooky corner in the land never to be forgotten. Won't some of you girls please write to a happy little girl of fifteen? I'm sure I could sweep you off your feet with my interesting letters. What more could one want? I'm five feet six, have brown wavy hair, and am a sophomore in high school. Also, am head over heels in love with sports and especially dancing. Come one, come all, and capture my letters. MISSY OF JERSEY.

I am a Yankee girl of twenty-four and I have brown hair and hazel eyes. I am rather lonesome and would like to hear from some girls interested in dancing and horseback riding, also outdoor life. Won't you please write to me?

BOBBY OF MAINE.

I am twenty years old, five feet four, reasonably good-looking and Irish. I have been in this country only two years, and I can tell anybody a lot about Ireland and England.

IRISH PAT BELL.

I am a married girl of twenty-three, have sonny boy who is twenty months old. I have reddish-blond hair, green eyes and am five feet six, weigh 122. Love all sports and letters, so come on, girls, and write to BUDDY IN DIXIE.

I am a girl of sixteen, dark curly hair, brown eyes. My hobbies are swimming, dancing, music, tennis and traveling. I will answer promptly all letters addressed to

ADELL OF CHARLESTON.

I'm but an ordinary girl with a bug for writing letters. Brown-haired, sixteen years old; weight—never mind; nose (pardon me) nobody's business. My main hobby is "to enjoy life." I enjoy all outdoor sports, dancing, reading, writing, music, acting and art. 'Nuff said. Come on, pen pals, grab some paper and a pen and write to

KAY OF SAC CITY.

Just another lonesome one! Am past forty—live wire, active business woman. Enjoy all kinds of outdoor activities. Am a good scout, like to go places and see things, but am a stranger in a small town and find time hanging heavy on my hands. Should like to hear from some one similarly situated, especially those who are interested in outdoors, business, travel and reading. Won't you write to FLAPPER AUNT?

I am just an ordinary girl of fifteen, and don't need to describe myself in particular. I love sports, music, dancing, driving a car—now, didn't I say I was ordinary! I wonder if there is any one else with this mixture: Norwegian, Welsh, Irish and Scotch, or what have you? Yes, I know I've taken more than my allotted space, but please, girls, write to

JUST ORDINARY ME.

Won't you please find me some nice pen pals? Just love to write letters and will promise an answer to every one. So come on, girls, and take pity on a lonely sister. Would especially enjoy letters from Chicago pen pals. If you wish to know all about me then write at once.

"BABS."

Heigh ho, pals! I'm not very lonely, but would like to have more pen pals. I have brown curly hair, blue eyes, weigh 150, and am one yard two feet and ten inches "long." I am eighteen, and always "rarin'" to go. So "reach for a pen instead"—and write to IRISH.

I live out in the big country where I see a great deal of life. I am a high school girl of eighteen, five feet three, dark brown hair, light complexion and bluish-gray eyes. My favorite hobbies are letter writing, reading, skating and dancing. I would especially like to hear from high school pupils between sixteen and eighteen.

JOSEPHINE FROM INDIANA.

Five feet two, blue eyes, brown curly hair, good sport, not prejudiced against opposite sex. Write!

CONNEY OF MINNEAPOLIS.

I am nineteen, brown eyes and hair to match, six feet tall and weigh 160. My hobby is all kinds of sports.

LONELY WOULD-BE COWBOY.

Joy wants to be taken into every one's heart. Sixteen, with blond hair and blue-green eyes. Just five feet tall and interested in sports. Also collect movie stars' pictures. JOY.

I am just a lonely girl of "sweet sixteen," having brown eyes, brown hair and light complexion. Am five feet tall, weigh 110, and never tire of any kind of sports that are worth doing. Come on, everybody, and write!

BROWN EYES FROM N. C.

Will you try to make a girl's blues into happiness by writing me, pen pals? I am fifteen with dark hair and blue eyes. Well, girls and boys, don't make love in the cornfield because corn has ears. DOROTHY OF NORTH ADAMS.

Philosopher, dreamer, idealist and hobo royal. A gypsy of life, asking little, getting less and deserving less. Have done a bit of roving, but am equally at home either in the Ritz or on the open road. Have a nodding acquaintance with three languages. Salesman, dance promoter, reporter; a bit of short story writing, a season in both vaudeville and stock has not demonstrated to me my vo- or avocation. The shady side of thirty finds me, a kid watching the sun going down on what might have been, on the isle of forgotten dreams. EARL.

I am writing to ask you a great favor: get me some pen pals to write to me in Mexico. I am a girl five feet two, black hair, dark green eyes, not fat nor thin, not much to look at, nothing to see, just glad that I'm living and happy to be. I'll send snapshots and many things I'll tell you. ELMA.

I'm a girl of fifteen, red curly hair, blue eyes, and am five feet two. Sports are my hobby and so is dancing. BABE CONTESSA.

I am lonesome, sixteen, blond hair, blue eyes, and weigh 120. I'm full of mischief and fun. I love all sorts of sports and can do whatever my brother can do; that is, climbing fences, trees, playing football and baseball. I love to hunt butterflies and sell them for trays, pictures and lockets. I also like to try experiments in science and a great many other things which will have to wait. I have oceans of time to write. I love to ask and answer questions if I can answer them. Would love to hear from pen pals living out West.
"MISCHIEF RENEE OF MASS."

I am twenty-two, five feet four, dark brown hair and brown eyes. I am a French girl, lover of books, like the movies, and promise to answer all letters in French or English.
JUST FLO.

I live in a small town where there's not much to do; sometimes I get lonesome. I am fifteen, blond curly hair, dark blue eyes, clear complexion, although I have a coat of tan now, considered very good-looking. I weigh 115 and am five feet seven inches tall. I love all sports, especially swimming, dancing and tennis.
MADELYN.

I am twenty-two, five feet three, dark brown curly hair and hazel eyes. I've been teaching school for the last five years, but have a lot of spare time on my hands now, and would like to hear from pen pals from all over the world.
EV', MICHIGAN.

Won't you write to a lonesome girl of fifteen? Never mind my looks. All my friends say I can pass on that subject. I have light hair, blue eyes, light complexion, and am five feet four. Come on and write to me. Get ready—set—go! I will exchange snapshots.
ANXIOUS BELL.

I am a lonesome girl of sixteen, have blond hair, blue eyes, about five feet five, and weigh 114. To tell you the truth, I haven't received a letter in about a month. Sometimes I get so lonesome for a letter that I write myself one. You may think it a silly thing to do, but even that makes me feel better.
TEDDY LARKIN.

I am twenty, dark hair and brown eyes, weigh 110, and care for all sports. I love to dance and swim, and love all kinds of music. Sure do want to make friends and get letters from all over the world. How about it? First of all, I would love to hear from darkest Africa. I'm interested to hear all about it. Also, I will tell you all about my town if you would like to hear about it. I know many things, like cooking, housework and sewing. But I know one thing that I'm not lucky in is love. I will watch for the mail man for a letter. THELMA OF ALTOONA.

I would be pleased as Punch if you would add my name to your Lonesome Club. I am a senior in high school, with brown hair, blue-gray eyes, and am five feet five. Writing, dancing, movies and basket ball have my attention. Let's see my mail box filled. OLIVE OF OHIO.

Here's another lonesome pal asking admittance to your circle. So please say "open sesame" and I'm sure the magic will work. I want letters from every one, as every one is different, and I want letters from everywhere because everywhere is interesting. I'm five feet five, have light brown hair, hazel eyes, and a happy-go-lucky smile that fits my seventeen years. I love all sports and am quite interested in commercial art and the Spanish language. So come on, pals, everybody write to HAPPY-GO-LUCKY.

Have you room for me? I am a girl of thirteen with light brown hair and blue eyes. I like all sports and am fond of dancing, reading and making motion picture albums. I promise to answer all letters and return snapshots, so every one get out their pens and write to
BILLIE OF S. DAK.

I would like every reader of the Lonesome Club to correspond with me. Come on now, every one, and write long newsy letters. I would like to hear from those near my own age. I am twenty years old, five feet seven, weigh 136. I have brown eyes and red hair, am popular with all my friends and hope to be as popular with the pen pals of the Lonesome Club. I love dancing and reading and all open air sports. I sure like to write, too.
CAROL OF CALIFORNIA.

I adore your club and certainly would enjoy corresponding with your members. I'm a brunette and have blue eyes, free, white and twenty-one. Love to do anything and everything that is any fun. I'm peppy and would love to receive some

spicy letters from all over the globe. Who wants a regular pal? Try me, please—I'm like Chesterfields: I satisfy. MICKY.

I would love to join your Lonesome Club and have some real pen pals. I live in the country and have only one girl near who also wishes pen pals. I am sixteen, blue-gray eyes, wear specs, am blond and five feet four. I love to read and cook. KIDDO FROM OHIO.

Will you take pity on a poor lonesome girl from New Jersey? I am sixteen, five feet four, with blue eyes and brown hair. I love to skate, write and read, would like to exchange snapshots, so won't you all write soon to

LONESOME ANN?

I am a young wildcat from the Lone Star State (Texas) and would like to hear from all sorts of young people. I am a girl of sixteen, about five feet, black curly hair, and dark complexion. I love all sports, especially swimming, dancing and joy riding. So here's hoping that the bunch will write to me. I promise to answer all letters and exchange photos. I like the men—the strong sex—but I'll even welcome man-haters. Just try me. Heh, heh, heh.

TEXAS BABY.

I am a girl of fifteen, blond, blue eyes and five feet one. I was born in New York City, lived there for a while, then Philadelphia, then Baltimore, then Florida and now I live in a little town of Maryland. I just love to write and to receive letters. I am not lonesome because I dance, swim, paint and draw a great deal. I write, and often I write poems. Nearly every night I go to the movies, because there isn't anything to do in the evenings in this quaint old place, except going to the movies or a dance occasionally. I have the "craze" to become an actress, but my elders say that I will outgrow it and some day paint a famous picture. I am really a maniac on the subject of animals. How I do love them! Also I have a sentimental side of life. I love to read. I love nature such as birds, flowers, etc. I even like to sew! But I always find plenty of time to answer my letters. I would be just thrilled to join your club, Mrs. Dale.

EDDIE OF MARYLAND.

Just a little girl who would like to get some pen pals, for I love to write and am very lonesome. I am eighteen, five feet two, weigh 105. I have brown hair, very curly, blue eyes, and I love outdoor sports, horseback riding, dancing; I play tennis and have my own court. I live on a farm. I like to skate and am considered very good around here. I will exchange snapshots with any one and can tell all a great many nice things. Hoping to get lots and lots of letters from all of you. LEONA OF OGILVIE.

I am a peppy Canadian kid, dying for letters from the States and foreign countries. Come on! Where are all you life savers? I'm sixteen, a brunette with large blue eyes, five feet four. I'm crazy over sports and especially over dancing and drawing. So come on, all you "dancing daughters," pick up your pen and drop a line to

BINGO.

I was twenty-one in August, have brown hair and dark eyes, five feet four. Have been married a little over a year. I'd like very much to hear from any one who cares to write, either married or single, or elderly people.

A LONESOME GIRL OF MAINE.

Please, may I join your Lonesome Club? I am not really lonesome, but gee! I love to receive and answer letters. I am a girl seventeen, single, have curly golden-brown hair, black eyes, clear, fair complexion, weigh 118, and am five feet four inches tall. I am a junior in high school. I love all kinds of sports, such as basket ball, tennis, baseball, swimming and horseback riding, and also enjoy reading very much. Now come on, good friends, and write to me, for I have just lots of stamps. DAWN OF MISSOURI.

I'm lonesome, fourteen, have blue eyes and red hair. Freckles of course. I am tall and thin, too. I enjoy writing letters, but most of all receiving them. So let my mail box begin to fill up.

FRECKLES OF FLA.

I am seventeen, five feet four, black hair and blue eyes. I am an Irish boy, only seven months here, and am very lonesome for some pals. I am a lover of all sports, and like girl friends, too.

JOLLY PAL.

I am a fellow of good experience, a civil service man, five feet eight, twenty years old and have brown eyes and dark hair. I have traveled quite a bit in the States and abroad.

CARTER OF GOVERNORS ISLAND.

Just a line to let you know I'd like to join your club in getting pen pals who live across the seas and like to get pen pals in Florida and New Orleans and Detroit. I'm a dark blonde with greenish-gray eyes, five feet one, twenty-three in September. I get quite lonesome sometimes. DOROTHY OF ARIZONA.

I'm twenty-four, black hair and brown eyes, five feet eight. I'm of Portuguese descent and would like to have some pen pals of my nationality. Wishing you success,

PRIVATE JOHN IN HAITI.

I'm eighteen with light hair and blue eyes, live in the country and enjoy outdoor life, fond of music, dancing, and all kinds of sports. I especially enjoy corresponding. I'm a stenographer, but don't intend going to work for some time.

MIDGET.

Hear ye! Hear ye! Into your midst comes a dimpled lass of sixteen, black-haired, brown-eyed, sun-tanned, seeking pen pals from the four corners of the earth. She weighs 98 pounds and is a "jolly junior" in high school. Being one of those "you-all" girls, she doesn't know much about skating, hockey and other ice sports, but what she can't tell you about tennis, basket ball, golf—especially miniature—and dancing, just *isn't!*

DIMPLES FROM CRESCENT CITY.